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CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROBLEMS

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A Course of Lectures delivered at the University of Padua

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BY

ACHILLE LORIA

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

BY

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FOREWORD

SOME years ago a number of students of the various faculties of the University of Padua asked me to deliver a weekly lecture devoted to the more general notions of political economy—and of a popular character.

The number of persons who attended these lectures was such as to convince me that intelligent people now are greatly interested in the development of both social phenomena and social theories, consequently, having received several requests to publish the lectures in the form of a book, I have decided to do so. In now offering these lectures—with some slight changes—to the public, I feel bound to add that it was no part of my plan to discuss the more burning problems of the day or to attempt to solve them; therefore anyone who seeks in these pages a profound and rigorous analysis of our social organisation will be disappointed. However, in a country which has a horror of a problem and dearly loves an axiom, the mere posing of a question, by inducing people to think, may not be fruitless; this task consequently is part of the duty of every conscientious worker. I am therefore glad to contribute, however modestly, to this work.

ACHILLE LORIA.

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CHAPTER I

SOCIAL QUESTIONS

UNTIL recently political economy has everywhere been distrusted, and even now, instead of being eagerly studied and respected, it is in many countries looked upon with aversion, if not with positive contempt. The science at the present time occupies a position similar to that held by medicine two centuries ago, when small wits vied with each other in ridiculing physicians and their art; Molière's strictures regarding the doctors, whose patients all died—but strictly in accordance with the rules of medicine—set all France to laughing, while Spain made merry over the physicians of the school of Doctor Sangrado, who by copious bleeding removed the disease, but at the same time the patient. All Italy echoed the triumphant exclamation of a famous surgeon—"The operation is successful, though the patient is dead!"

Satires no less caustic have been uttered and still are spread regarding political economy. Carlyle called it the "gloomy science." To Thiers it was

a "bore." Someone else described it as the "national guard of science," and our illustrious poet Carducci girded the "elegant and suave economist."

Political economy, however, is not to be ridiculed with impunity any more than is medicine. Every assault made on science reacts upon the assailant. Medicine's revenge on its detractors has always been overwhelming, as is shown by the abnormal mortality which has prevailed during those times when physicians have been especially held up to ridicule. No less appalling is the revenge of political economy as it stands revealed in the poverty and decline of those modern nations which have most persistently and systematically defied its laws. Of all the countries, of both hemispheres, Italy is the one that has shown least concern for economic laws, and the one which has constantly violated them in her commercial, monetary, agricultural and international policies. Her politicians apparently have vied with each other in ridiculing the principles of economics and disregarding its laws. Are the leaders of this campaign to discredit the science satisfied with the results; have they reason to be proud of their achievements? Their success may be read in the chronic deficit in the national budget; in the bankruptcy of the state; in the chaotic condition of the banks; in the discontent of the people; in the poverty prevalent among all classes of society; and finally in the periodic famines which devastate the most fertile parts of our fair land—such are the fruits gathered by those who deride the principles of economic science.

If ignorance and disregard of the laws of political economy have in the past proved disastrous, how much more dangerous will this attitude be in the future—for the economic factor which, until recently, played only a secondary part, has now become the preponderating element—in fine it is now the sole factor in the tormenting questions which afflict civilised society.

We are now confronted by an economic problem ; all the phases of our social life have assumed an economic aspect, and only with the aid of political economy can they be brought into order and harmony.

It is true there have always been economic problems. Private property, although it was not born with humanity, as was formerly supposed, and is a comparatively recent phenomenon, has nevertheless existed for several centuries ; labour, capital, production, industry, money, credit and even banks, interest, profits and rent, are met with under somewhat different forms in the most remote periods of history ; but while there have been economic facts in all ages, the present is the first epoch to present an economic problem.

An analogy will illustrate this ; there have always been religious phonomena—sects, churches, ecclesiastical hierarchies, rites ; in all ages we discover political forms, sovereigns, governments, assemblies, international relations ; but what distinguishes our age from the past is the fact that we now have neither a religious nor a political question. When the Church tried to stifle thought, to confine

scientific investigation within rigid bounds; when it persecuted Galileo, condemned Giordano Bruno to the flames, and tortured Huss and Vanini, then, it is true, there was a religious question; there was a religious question when the Church endeavoured to exercise temporal authority; to prescribe the forms of government, and to lay down the boundaries of civil power. But religion now has entirely relinquished these aims; it no longer tries to combat scientific theories, however audacious they may be; it tolerates the doctrines of Darwin, and of Spencer, and the still more radical ones of Haeckel and Moleschott; it has retreated into the mysterious depths of the conscience, which it should never have left; and in which it has an impregnable stronghold, a fortress which science can never reduce. The most materialistic science will never prevent the mother who has lost a child, the youthful lover who has lost his betrothed, from prostrating themselves at the steps of the altar and beseeching a God of Peace and Forgiveness for the solace that neither reason nor labour can bring. Therefore, religion now being reduced purely to a sentimental or psychologic phenomenon, there still remains a religious fact, although there is no longer a religious question.

With the political question it is the same. Formerly when the conflict raged between the democratic aspirations of the peoples and the tyranny of the princes, politics was a burning question. There was also a political question whenever a defenceless people was held slaves by a foreign race. But how can there be any political question now? At the

present time the form of government—at least in the more progressive and cultured countries—is so free that a political question is no longer possible. Civilised countries are now merely monarchical republics or republican monarchies in which there is more real freedom than there is in republics themselves. We may at the present time truthfully say that the prevailing political form is the republic, although its name may differ in the various countries. Moreover, with a few unfortunate exceptions, every citizen is now ruled by a government composed of his own countrymen. States are established on the sound basis of nationality and almost all traces of violence and conquest have disappeared. Therefore there is no longer a political question, although there are political phenomena; and while they present interesting technical problems, they do not give rise to any vital question. This is clearly proved by the political life developing before our eyes; it is also demonstrated by the fact that the divisions between the various parties have become almost obliterated and that political contests no longer cause any appreciable personal feeling. How is this to be explained? Simply by the fact that there is no longer any political question; or because the political problem has been solved.

In the economic field, however, there appears to have been a development in exactly the opposite direction. While religious and political problems have reached a more or less peaceful solution, and have left behind them only a few harmless and indisputable facts, the economic problem—whose

existence was never suspected until recently—has become more and more insistent and complex. Formerly when there was still a religious and also a political question, there was no economic question, and this was not because the condition of the labouring classes was any more favourable than it is to-day. The circumstances of the workers undoubtedly have often been better than they are at present; for example, during the Middle Ages the condition of the labourer in the Italian republics was far more favourable than it has ever been since; but this cannot be said of all the social phases which have preceded our own; there have been periods when the condition of the working classes reached a depth of degradation and poverty unequalled in our own day.

Formerly, when the working classes were denied all participation in the wealth, and were oppressed and crushed, they had no standing in the law; they lived in a state of slavery or vassalage, and, owing to this fact, were regarded as *things*, as incapable of possessing any rights. Hence, not having the right to possess anything, they possessed nothing. It was precisely their legal status which excluded them from the ownership of property and the enjoyment of the ordinary comforts of life. Between their legal status and their actual condition there was perfect agreement and harmony. At the present time, however, the situation is materially changed. Universal equality before the law has been proclaimed and no one is denied the right of owning property; all men are endowed with

equal rights and theoretically are equal before the law.

This purely legal equality is, however, confronted by the most glaring inequality of fact; this abstract and impotent equality is engaged in a death struggle with the most monstrous material inequality; theoretically enjoying equal rights, the starving proletarian and the millionaire (the latter a comparatively modern product) are separated by an abyss which is ever growing wider and wider. Hence arises the economic problem, and we ask: how is it that these two creatures, declared by law to be equal, are so unequally endowed? When society proclaimed the theoretic equality of all men before the law, why did it not, by the same act, provide means for realising equality in the concrete relations of life; or, at least, rendering all men equal so far as natural law is concerned, assuring to every one the possibility of existence?

I know some will answer this query by stating that the superiority in circumstances enjoyed by certain fortunate beings is due to their higher capabilities, and that society cannot prevent the more skilful from reaching loftier altitudes; that it cannot clip the wings of its more intelligent and virtuous members. This answer, however, is not deserving of serious consideration, for the most superficial observation will convince one of its absurdity.

When we see men who have consecrated their talents to the good of humanity; inventors of technical processes which bring about most beneficial changes in man's mode of existence, or save

thousands of lives, scarcely able to keep body and soul together and often dying in poverty; while on the other hand, we find in the United States a man whose sole talent consisted in noticing that modern cities develop toward the west, and who therefore bought large tracts of land to the west of cities to sell again—when we see this man accumulating millions, we cannot help asking ourselves how anyone can attribute the inequalities of fortune to disparities in intellect.

There is still another phase of the question. Men declared to be equal before the law have, or are supposed to have, not only equal private rights, but also equal public rights, therefore the irresistible process of evolution will accord, if it has not already accorded, the political right of the franchise. It is not difficult to foresee the monstrous effects which would be caused by political equality accompanied by a profound economic inequality. How can a man reduced to the most squalid misery, morally depraved, and a stranger to all the nobler sentiments, exercise the franchise intelligently? What would be the consequences of according the unrestricted right to vote to the ignorant peasant; to those persons who live in a single room, huddled together with wives, children and parents, often with brothers and sisters, and always with their pigs and fowls; a condition which gives rise to promiscuity, incest and every bestial vice! To this man, whom economic inequality has thus degraded, legal equality accords the right to vote! It makes him a legislator or a creator of legislators! Is it not clear

how unstable is the foundation thus constructed, upon which the edifice of the modern state rests? Under such conditions the slightest shock would cause the whole social fabric to crumble.

These facts furnish the basis for my assertion that now, for the first time, the economic problem has become insistent, preponderant; and this is the reason this question, unknown during the age of slavery and serfdom, could arise only with the proclamation of universal equality before the law. During earlier epochs ignorance of economic laws was at least excusable, but now it is well-nigh criminal, because for the first time the question of the life or death of society is entirely economic in nature, and economic science offers the only defence we may hope for against the dangers which threaten the social edifice.

The economic problem is the burning question of the day because a vast number of phenomena, apparently independent of the economic factor, are now intimately associated with it, or contain an essentially economic nucleus. Let us select certain phenomena seemingly far removed from economic relations—the phenomena of life and death, of matrimony and prostitution, of alcoholism and crime. On first consideration the laws of life appear to be wholly independent of political economy, but this is diametrically opposed to the truth for, strange as it may seem, the duration of a man's life is essentially dependent upon his material circumstances. The average life of the rich man is between fifty-five and fifty-six years, while that

of the poor man is only twenty-eight years. In Paris, in the millionaire quarter of the Champs Elysées, the death rate is 10 in 1000, while in the poor quarter of Montparnasse it is 43 in 1000; poverty cheats the poor out of a portion of their lives; the rate of mortality is determined by economic institutions—a startling phenomenon which finds poetic expression in the myths of the Australian savages, who attribute the origin of Death to the concentration of wealth. Let us turn to another interesting fact of the same order—infant mortality. For a long time statisticians were in the habit of saying that the higher mortality among infants was a perfectly natural phenomenon due to the slight resistance to disease offered by the more delicate organism of the child. Careful observers, however, have shown that an abnormally high infant mortality is found only among the poor, and that among the classes in comfortable circumstances it is no greater than it is among adults. Thus, for example, among the aristocratic families of Germany —according to Casper—the mortality of infants under five years is about 5·7 per cent., while among the poor of Berlin it is 34·5 per cent. It has also been observed in Germany that the infant mortality is highest in the great manufacturing centres. In Brussels the mortality among children under five years of age is 6 per cent. in the families of capitalists, while in those of labourers and domestic servants it is 54 per cent. In England, where the disparity is even greater, the grievous condition is rendered still more horrible by the taint of crime. In the

land of the pound sterling it is the custom for parents in the labouring classes to insure the lives of their offspring, ostensibly to provide means, in case of death, to meet the funeral expenses, a custom frequently responsible for the premature death of the insured; hence the mortality among the children of the poor is still greater than it would be under the immediate and sole action of the economic factor.

Thus at the present time the average duration of life in different classes varies with the degree of comfort and wealth. This was not the case formerly when conditions were worse in many respects than they now are, but when Death at least was impartial, as the poet said:

> "Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede
> Pauperum tabernas regumque turres."

This refutes the common statement of the optimists who tell us that mere inequalities of fortune occasion no vital differences, because an increase in wealth never brings a commensurate increase in pleasures—since sensations often repeated pall—the man who goes to the theatre two evenings in succession does not experience twice as much pleasure as the man who goes but one evening; the man who has three dishes for dinner does not have three times the enjoyment of the man who dines on but one. An excess of wealth not only procures a useless superfluity of pleasures for the few, but it also deprives the masses of necessities and causes

them endless suffering, which ends in premature death. The present unequal distribution of wealth therefore occasions not only a small increase in happiness for the favoured few, but it also opens a fatal chasm between their normal, physiological life and the degraded, melancholy and brief existence of the vast majority of the human race.

Passing from the study of death to that of disease, we again discover the indelible imprint of the economic element. Thus, one fact, which the medical profession for a long time was unable to explain, was the greater frequency of diseases of the lungs among the poorer classes. Certain English physicians have, however, explained the phenomenon in an interesting, if not very poetic, manner. The cause of the greater prevalence of diseases of the lungs among the poor is, they tell us, simply filth, which, obstructing the pores, forces the lungs to perform all the work of respiration. These organs thereby become weakened and liable to disease. It may be objected that there is nothing to prevent the poor from being a little more cleanly, and that, therefore, the economic element is not the cause of the phenomenon in question. When poverty, however, deprives man of the things most necessary for existence, degradation in his habits necessarily follows, notwithstanding the warnings of moralist and physician.

What phenomenon would seem to be more independent of the economic factor than marriage, the sublime union of two ardent souls of which the moralists have so much to say? Yet we always find that the number of marriages rises and falls

according to the influence of certain economic factors. We know that formerly the number of marriages varied with the price of grain, increasing when it was low, decreasing when it rose. The low price of food, rendering the maintenance of a family easier, induced the poor to venture into the state of matrimony. Now, however, civilised countries having become familiar with the modern phenomenon of industrial depression, a low price for grain does not always act as an incentive to matrimony, because it is frequently accompanied by a still further industrial depression which throws vast numbers of workmen out of employment. How shall it profit the labourer if the price of provisions is low, if he has nothing wherewith to purchase them? At the present time, however, the number of marriages instead of fluctuating inversely with the price of grain, fluctuates inversely with the extent of depression, and directly with international trade and the prices of exports; and again inversely with the number of unemployed. Furthermore the numerous divorces and separations of the married, and the many cases of adultery at the present time are largely due to the material conditions which determine modern marriages and often bind together two incompatible and wholly antagonistic beings.

When we examine the unhappy phenomenon of prostitution we at once discover that it also is due to causes essentially economic. Studying this phenomenon from both points of view—those of supply and demand—we find the latter is represented

by men whose material circumstances render it impossible for them to support a family in the comfort to which they have been accustomed; and that the supply is represented by women, unable by reason of poverty, to secure the necessities of life. Everyone knows what ravages prostitution causes among the women of the poor. In England, large numbers of country women are lost in the brutal orgies in which the itinerant farm labourers engage. In Germany, it has been observed that the coefficient of prostitution rises in years of scarcity and falls with the return of prosperity. In many of the cities of France working women still ply the execrable trade of the so-called "fifth quarter of the day"—that is, when their day's labour is done they roam about the streets to secure, by the sale of their favours, money to procure the necessities for which their wages are inadequate. It is scarcely necessary to mention the vast number of prostitutes supplied by the proletariat of the theatre—those unfortunate actresses who receive microscopic wages and are constantly compelled to purchase new and costly costumes. The very terms of their contracts force these unfortunates to resort to prostitution.

What is illiteracy—which in Italy is constantly becoming more frequent—but a product of poverty? For it is poverty that renders it impossible for parents to forego the labour of their children and forces them, instead of sending their little ones to school, to cast them at a tender age into the inferno of modern industry.

It is useless, therefore, so long as overwhelming

misery is the common lot of the proletariat to pass popular education laws. "Illiteracy," as Aristide Gabelli has well said, "will continue to be the great malady." Even if the children of the poor could be placed in school there is little ground for supposing that they would learn anything. In London a few years ago a number of intelligent persons interested in educational matters were impressed by the insignificant results obtained by the primary schools, but were unable to discover the cause; the teachers were capable, the children studious—and yet they learned nothing. A thorough investigation was made and it was found that a large proportion of the children came to school without breakfast and remained there several hours without any food. Was it any wonder that, stupefied by hunger, they did not profit by their lessons?

This revelation aroused great feeling among the upper classes of the metropolis, and as the discussion of social conditions in England is not mere academic dilettanteism—as the criticism of to-day there becomes the law, the institution, of the morrow—they met the difficulty by providing the so-called penny dinner, thus enabling the children of the poor to obtain a little nourishing food for a trifling sum. France has adopted and perfected this system, and in the public schools of Paris food is furnished gratuitously to the poorer pupils.

When we examine the phenomenon of suicide we find that in new countries, where the economic condition of the masses is at least fair—in Australia, for example—it is rare and is not perceptibly in-

creasing; while in Europe, where life, as Gladstone said, is merely a struggle for existence for nine-tenths of the people, suicides are innumerable and are constantly increasing. Alcoholism, which according to some anthropologists is the result of a congenital tendency, which they seek to explain by tracing the descent from some unhappy wretch who died of delirium tremens, is merely the inevitable consequence of exhausting labour, which impels the working man to seek forgetfulness of his lot and an illusory renewal of his enfeebled vital forces in intoxicating liquor. The keepers of rum shops in Australia violently opposed the reduction of the labouring day to eight hours because they appreciated this fact and foresaw that if the working man's condition was improved, and his labour rendered less arduous, he would to a large extent overcome his craving for drink.

It has been found in Germany that alcoholism is most prevalent among the poorest-paid workmen; and in those countries where the condition of the labourers is most miserable, drink reaps the most victims. Thus in Poland the peasants, who have reached the utter depths of wretchedness, are now physically ruined, a fact due to spirituous liquor. The priests labour devotedly to save the agricultural proletariat from the bestial vice; at the confessional, the peasant swears he will never again drink a glass of brandy—but to what purpose? The force of economic conditions will shatter a thousand oaths. The peasant is unable to abstain from the sweet poison, but to ease his conscience he has his brandy

brought him in a saucer and drinks it from a spoon!

In conclusion, crime in its manifold forms is essentially the product of economic factors. In Italy, 88 per cent. of those annually punished for the various crimes belong to the poorer classes and only 12 per cent. to the wealthy, and this notwithstanding the fact that the poor are much less than 88 per cent. of the population. In England it has been discovered that every rise in the rate of discount is followed by an outburst of crime, and that from the beginning of the nineteenth century the criminality of the poorer classes has been in a direct ratio with their poverty. On the continent of Europe crimes against property always increase with a rise in the price of provisions, and also with a fall in temperature; while crimes against the person increase when food is cheap or when wages rapidly rise. Further, Enrico Ferri has noticed that fewer persons break jail when food is high—hence there is an intimate relation between poverty and crime, and many crimes are committed simply to obtain bread and shelter at the expense of the State.

We are, therefore, always compelled to return to the conclusion that under the most diverse phenomena of contemporary social life, the profound, the essential cause is some economic fact. The Indian philosophers tell us that the earth is supported on the back of an elephant, and the elephant on an immense lotus leaf; the lotus leaf floats on a vast ocean—and thus they proceed for ever. We, however, are more fortunate than the Indian philo-

sophers, for we can unhesitatingly affirm that the sociological cosmos rests upon the economic element. Consequently it is to the study of this factor that we must look for the key to the great mystery of the social universe.

Because political economy contains the explanation of the social malady, and may assist us to relieve it, is precisely the reason the science is now contemned and derided. Formerly, despots hated all political questions, and also the science of government, which sought to solve these problems and therefore threatened the tyrant's power. To-day the omnipotent bourgeoisie—the anonymous despot—despises economic questions. And political economy, which endeavours to solve them, and also to discipline the present-day tyrants, is the object of their implacable hatred. In this battle between the fact and the idea—between privilege and equality—which will finally triumph? Only the future can determine; still, in conclusion I may be allowed to make a prophecy, the prophecy that in this titanic struggle Right and Justice opposed to Force and Privilege will reap the victory.

CHAPTER II

FREEDOM

ANYONE who will take the trouble to study the development of economic thought, without prejudice, from its beginnings down to the present time, will immediately discover that its evolution obeys a certain great law, the same law that controls all mental and vital phenomena, the law exemplified in Newton's binomial theorem—a name which need not frighten us, as it is the expression of a very simple and familiar fact. Newton's binomial is the sum of several terms which progressively increase up to a maximum and then begin to decline until they finally reach a minimum. This is the law of the parabolic curve; and as all phenomena—physical, mental and social—follow a parabolic course we may truthfully say that this general law underlies all manifestations. The applications of this law are universal; it is apparent in all the phenomena of life, the most minute as well as the most grandiose.

When beginning a task we all feel more or less disinclined to exert ourselves, but as we proceed in the work our interest and enthusiasm increase until the maximum is reached, whereupon our powers commence to decline, the relaxation sets in and

finally becomes complete. If we take a number of individuals by chance and arrange them according to their height we find that those of the smallest stature are few; as height increases, the number of individuals also increases until the average height is attained; beyond this point the number of individuals of unusual stature becomes smaller and smaller with each increment of height until the maximum is reached—that of giants, who are as scarce as dwarfs, in comparison with the rest of humanity. The sun appears on the horizon, mounts to the zenith or highest point, and then sinks to the horizon again. The law of the parabola governs every phenomenon of evolution, of development, of men, as of stars, of ideas, as of things. The great artists—for example, Mozart and Boito, whose masterpieces, *Don Giovanni* and *Mephistopheles*, close with the same motive with which they begin—appreciated this fact, a subtle and poetic expression of the universal law of the parabola.

The development of the economic idea, and also that of legislation and political economy, obeys this same law. The study of the evolution of economic ideas is interesting not merely as an archæological investigation of the opinions of certain more or less obscure individuals, but also as the purest and most highly elaborated expression of the prevailing economic and legislative forms in the various historical epochs. Certain ideas are found to be characteristic of absolute despotism and certain others as inherent in the most oppressive legal system; others gradually arise against the

tyranny of too harsh laws and in the interest of greater freedom and pave the way for far-reaching individual initiative in the economic sphere; and finally, when economic freedom holds undisputed sway, when all bonds have been cast off, the work of criticism begins and exposes the evils of which this freedom is the cause. Following this revelation individual activity is again placed under the restraints of legislative shackles—materially different, it is true, from those of the previous era, but no less rigid and effective, for circumscribing and limiting the scope of individual action. Thus we proceed, from slavery to freedom and from liberty to licence, and from the latter again back to thraldom—the final term of evolution being identical with the first.

In the Middle Ages, when the economic idea was first clearly discerned, we find that economic freedom was generally and systematically repressed by the governments, and that scholars devoted all their talents to justifying and defending the bonds with which the State oppressed and restricted the activity of the producer. A strong network of chains completely bound the individual and hampered him all the days of his life. Studying Mediæval agricultural conditions we find that the proprietor, common or noble, feudal lord or vassal, was required to cultivate the land strictly in the manner prescribed by law; to divide his property into zones or strips, each of which had to be devoted to a different crop, determined by edict—and woe to the man guilty of any infraction of the law! The

peasant was not allowed to leave the country districts, and if perchance, with the consent of his superiors, he went to the city, he was compelled to live in a special quarter and to wear two stripes of yellow cloth on his jacket, one in front and one behind. Trees in private forests overthrown by the wind and cast over the borders of the royal lands became the property of the king. If a poor man removed any grain or fruit from another person's land it cost him a tooth, and as to the peasant who ventured to hunt within the lord's domain—in the crude Latin of Matthew of Paris—*abscidebantur virilia.*

In the cities, conditions were no less degrading and oppressive than they were in the rural districts. Weavers were compelled by law to make their cloth fifteen yards long and seven quarters wide, on penalty of losing a hand. The trades were sharply defined, and the artisan who performed any work not strictly connected with his own was severely punished. For example, not only was the weaver forbidden to make clothes, but the archer was not allowed to make the arrows he required, this work being the privilege of the fletcher. At the great fairs, merchants were forbidden to solicit the trade of a possible purchaser who happened to be nearer another dealer's booth. Foreign merchants were not allowed to remain in England for more than forty days at a time. If a citizen neglected to pay his taxes the door of his house was walled up and he was forced to enter his domicile by means of a rope ladder suspended from a window—a delightful

way of punishing a recalcitrant tax payer, and at the same time holding him up to ridicule.

This was not all. The wages of workmen and the prices of goods were fixed by law, and severe punishment was meted out to him who transgressed. It was at this time that the stupid idea prevailed that money was the sole form of wealth, and under pain of death it was forbidden to melt up or export coin or the precious metals; moreover merchants from abroad were required to purchase domestic wares equivalent to the amount of money they had received for their own. Prohibitive duties were placed on both imports and exports. The poor were not allowed to leave their parishes without the consent of the proper officials; private letters were opened and read by rulers—Louis XV., in his old age, was a notorious offender in this respect. Working men were forbidden, under severe penalties, to wear gold or silver ornaments, pearls, silks, and even flowers on the occasion of public festivities—in fact, the list of vexatious restraints which the Middle Ages invented and enforced is well-nigh interminable. All human activities were smothered under a leaden mantle of restriction and tyranny. Life must indeed have been a burden amid such narrow, stifling surroundings; and the portraits which have come down to us of men of this epoch bear the imprint of profound melancholy, not unlike that which now marks, and for the same reason, the face of the young Russian.

These rigid restrictions, these chains which for centuries have hampered human activity, become

more and more intolerable as civilisation advances, therefore it is not surprising if a moment is reached when they cause a violent reaction on the part of thinkers and philosophers. In their courageous crusade against the dominant tyranny of past centuries the French physiocrats held a high place, for they were the first to raise the standard of economic freedom and to endeavour to break the fetters by which it was shackled. We must admit, however, that, noble as was the purpose of these writers, their arguments often were of slight value. They began with the theory that wealth consisted solely of agricultural products, whence they concluded the only way to increase the national wealth was to enhance the wealth and prosperity of the owners of the soil. Now, they continue, any obstacle placed in the way of production, distribution and circulation will tend to reduce the price of agricultural products and consequently to injure the owners of the soil; therefore these restrictions, like a ball and chain on the ankle, prevent the growth of national wealth. These economists, therefore, conclude that, if it is desirable that the national wealth be increased, all obstacles should be brushed away, all barriers removed, and every human activity allowed full sway—an economic theory which, if consistently carried out, would lead to entire passivity on the part of the State—or in other words administrative nihilism—*laissez-faire*.

It is not difficult to see that this line of reasoning is wholly fallacious. Confronted by the great successes of manufacturing industries, no one would

now venture to assert that all wealth consists of the products of agriculture and that to increase the national wealth it is only necessary to favour the owners of the soil. The premises being unsound the whole argument of the physiocrats crumbles. We are impressed not only by the absurdity but also by the pernicious character of this defence of economic freedom because it is adduced, not as a lofty principle in the interest of social harmony, but only to favour a special class, which, however important it may be, constitutes not the nation but only a small minority of it. Therefore the state of economic thought at this particular phase of its development may be summarized as follows :—on the one side a congeries of restrictions prohibitive of all human initiative and on the other an analysis of these restraints and the advocacy of absolute freedom, supported by sophism and fallacious arguments; triumphant tyranny and science wholly unable to cope with it, and not only actually, but also theoretically, incapable of pointing out the errors and crimes of the prevailing system—such was the condition of life and of economic science in the second half of the eighteenth century.

About this time there was born in a modest village in Scotland a man who was to perfect the system of destructive criticism directed against the barbarous restraints, and offer the world for the first time the luminous theory of economic freedom. This man was Adam Smith, of whom it may be said that throughout the course of his long life he was dominated by a single, burning idea, that of freedom; and

that a love of liberty was the inspiration of all his actions, as it was of all his theories. Long before he became celebrated as a writer, when he was still an obscure teacher, Adam Smith had shown in a practical manner how perfectly he understood the analysis and criticism of privileges and restrictions, for, the Licensed Corporation of Smiths of Glasgow having prevented James Watt from exercising his trade, Adam Smith hastened to the defence of the great inventor and induced the chancellors of the university to allow him to carry on his work in an enclosure connected with one of the buildings. Thus to the affairs of daily life he applied the love of freedom to which he was later to erect an imperishable monument in his remarkable work on the Wealth of Nations.

In this great work, Smith subjected the Mediæval restraints on industry and commerce to a searching analysis and pointed out the evils which they caused; he showed the benefits to be secured by economic freedom, proving that it helped not only the landed proprietors—as the physiocrats claimed—but also all other classes of society; whence he concludes that the greatest collective happiness can be secured only by allowing each individual freely to follow his own interests. "The Wealth of Nations," from its first to its last page, is a wonderful hymn to freedom; this is the supreme idea which permeates and renders the masterpiece of the great Scotsman sympathetic and absorbing in the highest degree; and this it is, above all else, to which it owes its great and undisputed success—

a success probably greater than ever fell to the lot of any other book.

In this connection, however, we must be careful not to misunderstand him. While Smith applied all his talents to the destruction of the bonds with which the Middle Ages had burdened all forms of industry, and proclaimed the redemption of humanity from the slavery of the dark ages, he was far too clear a thinker not to see that freedom wholly unrestricted might cause untold evils; and he did not imagine that the unchecked play of the economic forces would automatically secure social harmony. On the contrary he deplored the usurpations of the landowners, of the merchants, and of the capitalists, to the injury of the labouring classes; and he unequivocally affirmed that in the countries of Europe "the two upper classes of the people (that is, the landowners and the capitalists) oppress the lower." He demands that the State, besides administering justice, shall provide instruction, especially for the poor; that it shall perform all work of public utility beyond the power of private enterprise; in fine, he has none of the radicalism of some of his disciples who would limit the office of the State to that of a night watchman for the protection of property. How great, for example, is the difference between Smith and Ferrara, the Italian economist, who would reduce the functions of the State almost to zero, even depriving it of the right to coin money! What an abyss between Smith and Molinari, the brilliant dean of French economists, who would even divest the State

of its police powers, and have property owners supply their own guards to protect their belongings. Of course, Adam Smith does not carry his analysis of economic conditions to a conclusion; and he does not fully appreciate the reparative action of the State. This, however, need not surprise us, for the historical and social value of his work consists chiefly in its condemnation of Mediæval restrictions of action; this was the battle he had to fight, and to which he was to devote his energies; and not until the barbarous fetters which confined human activity were cast off would it be possible to think of limiting industrial liberty or correcting its abuses.

Similarly, the heroic souls who wrote and fought for the redemption of Italy were indifferent to the *social question* because the *political revolution* demanded all their strength. Their neglect of the social question was not due to ignorance of it on their part, or because they felt it to be beneath them; some of them, especially Mazzini, recognised its importance, but another and a more pressing problem required all their energies, and not until this question was solved could the Italian intelligence devote itself to the question of property. At that time the solution of the political question was a condition precedent to the solution of the social problem, just as in Adam Smith's day criticism of the restrictions placed on industrial activity was a condition preliminary to the analysis of capitalistic economy.

With the publication of Smith's work, or owing to its influence, the principle of economic liberty

triumphed throughout the civilised world, and the Gothic edifice of political and administrative restrictions crumbled into dust. This freedom, however, greeted at its birth by a chorus of universal enthusiasm, was not slow to display, even to the least perspicacious, the reverse of the medal; and the more absolute and unchecked this freedom became the more odious were some of its consequences, which might have been foreseen by the most inexperienced. If personal freedom unaided was to secure collective harmony, it could only be after the vast inequalities between individuals were eliminated. To substantiate this statement it is only necessary to remember the profound principle enunciated by Ardigò—that spontaneous mutual respect for the welfare and rights of others can arise only when individuals know that they are equal. From this principle it follows that this knowledge, and consequently this respect, can exist only when there actually is equality, and that where it is lacking the inevitable result of unchecked personal freedom is usurpation and the exploitation of the weak by the strong. Given two men endowed with equal strength it is quite unnecessary to pass any laws forbidding them to molest each other, for, if one strikes the other, the least he can expect in return is a blow of like force; self-interest therefore will hold them both in check. On the other hand, if the two men are unequal in strength, and are left free to do as they please, the stronger will not hesitate to seize the weaker by the throat and, if he is a cannibal, he will devour him; if he is a pagan or a

coloniser he will enslave him; or if he is a modern capitalist he will compel him to work for him day and night for a miserable mess of pottage. Wherever inequalities of individual strength exist, unchecked freedom will inevitably give birth to usurpation and oppression.

Even those who are not easily convinced by *a priori* reasoning, and who recognise facts only, will immediately perceive how terrible are the results of economic freedom in a society composed of individuals economically unequal. The social history of the first half of the eighteenth century, and even later, is nothing but a record of outrageous abuses on the part of the capitalistic and land-owning classes committed under the ægis of unlimited economic freedom. In England and in the Roman Campagna, the landed proprietors began by forcibly expropriating the peasants who held under lease, and converted the land into pastures; while manufacturers, anxious to secure cheap and docile labour, displayed a Satanic eagerness in filling their shops with children. The beautiful valleys of Derbyshire were the scenes of the blackest crimes committed by robbers who stole great numbers of children and forced them to work in factories where, in a suffocating atmosphere, the poor little wretches were subjected to the most brutal severity. Children of three and four years were tied to chairs and made to work, and when they writhed with hunger in the seat of torture the whip reduced them to silence. Many of these unfortunates ended their suffering by suicide—and although Esquirol, in his treatise on

mental diseases, had declared child-suicide to be impossible, it became a frequent and normal phenomenon, thanks to unrestricted industrial freedom. At the same time the women were compelled to engage in the most exhausting labour; the working hours of adult men were lengthened, and night work was introduced on a large scale. This was followed by a marked degeneration of the race and a terrible deterioration in the hygienic and vital conditions of the labouring classes. In Italy, simultaneously with the triumph of the idea of industrial freedom, the nourishment of the people sensibly diminished. Before the sixteenth century the chief article of diet of the Italian labourer was wheat, corn being left to the animals; not until the beginning of the seventeenth century did the Italian peasantry begin to share the animal's food. Then it was that Italy became the country "where," as Plautus says, "weep the people who live on polenta"—"*ubi flent homines qui polentam pransitant.*"

Russian capitalists, free to do as they pleased, bought spoiled provisions from the State warehouses and paid their workmen's wages with them; and at the same time, by their operations on the Bourse, so raised the price of wheat that wage-workers were unable to purchase it and were compelled to content themselves with rye.

In the mines of Cape Colony, even now, the black labourers are watched night and day by armed guards, who, to prevent the negroes from stealing the precious stones by swallowing them, are required to examine their excrement after giving them

a purge—thus modern freedom is essentially freedom for the aristocracy, while the most exacting slavery is still the lot of the proletariat.

Again the evils of complete economic freedom are disclosed no less hideously in navigation and commerce. In England and Germany, vessel-owners frequently insure unseaworthy ships for large sums —knowing that they are sending their unfortunate crews to certain death—but why should the shrewd speculator not reap an honest penny? In the maritime cities these craft are aptly called tomb-ships—and of a truth they are vast tombs, destined themelves to be buried in the depths of the sea. No less deplorable are the results of *laissez-faire* in commerce, where, owing to the unbridled competition, the adulteration and imitation of wares is constantly carried on in the most brazen manner.

It has been said that the most suitable epitaph for the soldiers who died in the Crimea would be: "Died of salt pork!" And it is a fact that the British soldiers were decimated, not by Russian Gatling guns, but by disease caused by spoiled provisions furnished by greedy contractors.

When we turn from the abnormal time of war, and examine the conditions prevalent in time of peace, we are met by similar and no less grievous phenomena. Analyses made in England of some of the necessities of life have resulted in shocking disclosures, and the innocent consumer may well tremble as he reads the list of heterogenous substances he is compelled to swallow under the names of sugar, coffee, bread. In the last alone were found alum, soap, lime and gypsum.

In the domain of monetary affairs liberty has not proved an unmixed blessing. In all countries where banks of issue are permitted to be a law unto themselves, complete anarchy prevails in the banking systems. Owing to the lack of regulation of the rate of interest, the agricultural worker and the small landowner fall prey to the usurer.

In State finance, economic freedom causes a vast increase in Government loans and in the imposition of indirect taxes, to the great injury of the poorer classes.

The baneful effects of unrestricted economic freedom are constantly becoming more apparent, and therefore the necessity of confining it within rigorous bounds is ever growing more evident. The eternal refrain of the optimists that freedom itself will finally cure the evils it occasions, and that it necessarily leads to social harmony, is absolutely disproved by facts. Both a theory and a means to restrict liberty are necessary. Adam Smith removed the swaddling clothes which hampered the infant's movements—now well developed and intolerant of all bonds—and his work was of the greatest value, but, the swaddling clothes having been removed, the infant should not have been left naked to the air. It ought to have been clad with other garments, different from and less hampering than those it had previously worn, but still capable of restricting its untrained movements. This exaggerated industrial freedom—the source of so many evils—ought to have been held in check; in the excesses of its rapacity it threatened to destroy the dignity,

the very life of humanity. It was precisely this necessity—felt by all thinkers—that led to the formation of a new school of political economy—the so-called socialism of the chair in Germany, and philanthropic economy in England—and which in Italy has found numerous able champions—Cossa, Messedaglia, Luzzatti, Lampertico, C. F. Ferraris, Cognetti de Martiis, Cusumano, Morpurgo, Ricca-Salerno, Toniolo, etc. The object of this school, whose numbers and prestige are increasing daily, is to discover ways and means to restrict industrial freedom and prevent the abuses to which it gives rise. Some good results have been secured—although they are still somewhat modest—in the field of social legislation. In England the law intervenes to restrict the labour of women and children, the hours of work, etc.; in Ireland the State helps small tenants to buy farms by lending them the necessary money on favourable terms; in Germany entrepreneurs are required to insure their employees against accident, sickness and old age. The law also forbids the payment of wages in kind—a source of deplorable abuses and injury to the worker; it requires dwellings built for the labouring man to be decent and sanitary; the agricultural contract has become more observant of the rights of labour; in short, a large number of salutary laws have been enacted tending to restrict individual freedom where it might result unfavourably and give rise to dangerous abuses.

Thus economic freedom, in the course of the centuries, has completed the parabola which, as

I stated at the beginning of this chapter, exhibits the universal law of things. It began, modest and almost suffocated beneath the weight of Mediæval restrictions on manufacturing and agriculture; then it cast off its bonds, rose against the restraints which embarrassed it and found ardent but unprepared defenders in the French physiocrats; later, it fought its decisive battle against economic tyranny under the direction of Adam Smith, who led it from victory to victory until it dominated the entire civilised world.

The baneful effects of unrestricted liberty, however, were not slow to manifest themselves; and they finally became so intolerable that a violent reaction set in throughout the civilised world. Then arose a new school of political economists who recognised the pressing necessity of rigorously limiting economic freedom. Under the influence of this school, liberty was again curbed, not in the feudal, barbarous manner which had prevented all progress—and in the majority of cases was distinctly to the advantage of the ruling classes—but in a modern and progressive way, compatible with the normal expansion of the productive forces and directed toward the protection of the weak and the realisation of justice.

Reducing the evolution of the economic idea to its simplest expression, I should say that, in its first stage, it is summed up in the word *authority*, because it subjected every manifestation of human activity to the edict of a prince; in its second phase its animating principle is *property*, since the physiocrats advocated the abolition of feudal restraints, but to

the exclusive advantage of the landowners; in its third period its dominating spirit was *freedom*, which finds its supreme exponent in Adam Smith; finally in the fourth, the present phase, it is *justice*.

The aim, the principle that now dominates economic theory, is therefore infinitely higher and nobler than those which hitherto have inspired the science, because it seeks not to benefit any one class, or to prevent the free exercise of the individual's energies, but to establish a just balance in human affairs. At present its purpose is not that every man shall *do* according to his talents, but also that he shall *do good*; that by his actions his fellows shall gain, not suffer. Toward this goal are directed the efforts of political economists of every school—of those of England, of America, of Russia, of Australia—all are united by one purpose, one thought—to alleviate the sufferings and remove the contrasts by which our social system is vitiated and dishonoured.

CHAPTER III

PROPERTY

"THE problem of property, next to that of human destiny," says Proudhon, "is the most stupendous with which man's reason has to contend, and the last which it will solve." This vast problem has occupied the human intellect from the most remote ages, but not until recently has it been critically and scientifically studied. If we ask what manner of scholars formerly discussed the question of property we find that it was not the economists, but certain abstract theorists, who examined it, and not always with a very laudable aim. All who are familiar with the works of the classic economists know that they do not discuss the question of property. The great English economists—James Steuart, Adam Smith, Ricardo, Senior, Torrens, James Mill—do not even mention it. Most of the classic Italian economists are silent on the subject. Beccaria, for example, confines himself to describing property as a "terrible and perhaps unnecessary right."

The jurists, however, eagerly seized on the problem and made a sort of intellectual monopoly of it, and they fancied they had solved the question by cutting the Gordian knot with the aid of certain

sententious aphorisms, and a few deductions from the supreme and elastic principles of natural law—for, of a truth, they are elastic, varying according to the preconceived ideas of the professors or according to the school to which they belong. These principles, however, are not invoked to explain the phenomenon of property or to analyse its intricate relations. The sole purpose of the jurist is to furnish a reasonable justification of acquired rights and to endow the person of the proprietor with a character of legitimacy which, like a luminous aureola, shall encircle his noble brow.

Among the justificatory theories—whose subtle purpose is plainly discernible—I will mention, simply as a matter of curiosity, only those that derived the right to property from the simple fact of possession; from the personality of the possessor; from his needs, from work performed, and from *law*.

According to the first theory, which is common to the Roman jurists, and was handed down by them to the modern, the logical basis of property consists in the simple fact of possession; the man who first established himself on a piece of land, and surrounded it with a hedge, became its legitimate owner, and acquired by this simple act, by this commonplace formality, the right to demand rent for this piece of land, and to transmit it to his most remote descendants. This theory has found adherents almost down to our own times, among them Puffendorf and Grotius. This doctrine may explain the fact but it does not justify it. Admitting for a moment what these philosophers affirm, that

historically private property is a sort of reward for occupying it, we ask how does a man who simply plants his staff on a piece of land and says: "This is mine!" become its sole owner, by virtue of what principle does he acquire an absolute right to this land, by what law is the rest of humanity deprived of it for ever? However, the very premises of fact with which these authors begin are untrue. They seek to explain the origin of property with a fiction which has been repeated from time immemorial in manuals of political economy.

Once upon a time, but it was long, long ago, there was a piece of land which was owned by no one, and had never been cultivated; a man chanced to come by, he stopped, broke a branch from a tree, made it into a rude agricultural instrument and with it worked a portion of the land. Then he surrounded it with a hedge and announced: "This is mine!" "Behold!" exclaim the theorists triumphantly, "behold, the genesis of property!"

This legend, however, is entirely disproved by history, which clearly shows that the primitive occupation of the land, instead of giving birth to the right of property, was merely a form of transitory possession of the soil, which belonged to the occupant only so long as he worked it. From the Germany of Tacitus to colonial America; from prehistoric England to modern Russia, all the countries of the world furnish us proof of the inability of primitive occupation to generate the right of private property, and of the absence of this form of appropriation in the infancy of humanity.

The word property does not exist in the early stages of a language; in Greece, for example, where mere occupation was never a means for acquiring a right to property, the word for property does not appear until a comparatively late period; while in Russia it is not found until relatively recent times—in the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

During a later period, and following an uncertain right of possession, which lasted for some centuries, and which was the basis of manufacturing and production, this primitive right gave place to the right, not of *private*, but of *collective*, property, belonging to the community or village, the clan or the mir; and it was not until the third stage, when civilisation had made considerable progress, that the institution of private property arose and became general; moreover, it was established, not by pacific means, but by violent usurpations, by a brutal confiscation of the soil, which was torn from the productive *community* in the most brazen manner. Property therefore did not spring, as the theorists of natural law claim, from the innocent occupation of a *res nullius*, but it was born of the violent seizure of a *res communis*, committed by a few powerful individuals at the expense of the many.

Equally invalid is the claim of those who, like Ahrens, base the right of property on human necessities, affirming that man needs, in order that he may live, certain objects belonging to the external world, and that therefore he is compelled to appropriate them. It is easy to see, however, that this theory,

instead of justifying the right of property, leads straight to its negation—to absolute communism; for it is evident that if property is the correlative of human needs, all men are bound to have property, since all are subject to wants. Moreover, if this theory were correct every man's property would have to be exactly proportionate to his needs; the wealth of the single man would necessarily be less than that of the benedict; that of the abstemious man less than that of the epicure; that of the miser less than that of the prodigal—in short, the law would be the exact antithesis of the actual present distribution of property.

The fact that one school of socialism condemns private property, and advocates a new form of society in which each member shall receive an allotment proportionate to his needs, does not render the theory that private property is justifiable, because every man is subject to wants, any less unsound. In short, it is difficult to see how wants, which are essentially passive and inert, can create a right, and especially the most important of all real rights. On the contrary it is evident that if man were endowed only with wants, and possessed no active and productive powers, he would be absolutely incapable of securing any rights, any dominion over things.

Rosmini's theory, which regards the property right as a manifestation of the human personality, is much more rational. "Man," he says, "annexing external objects to his own sphere of action, impresses upon them the mark of his own personality, makes of them what might be called an extension of his

own being inseparable from himself; whence arises, as a natural corollary, his right to appropriate them to the exclusion of all other persons."

This doctrine, although more logical than the others, will not withstand critical analysis, for, personality being something which all men possess, all ought to own property; therefore the existence of a class who possess nothing, taken in consideration with the present economic organisation, would be, according to this theory, inadmissible, even monstrous. If personality is property, make all men property owners; if you say that personality itself is not property, but that its action on things is the source of property, I reply that those who expend the greatest personality on things are precisely those who own the least, and on the other hand those who modify things the least are those who possess the lion's share. How then is property the correlative of human personality. If the property right is a natural emanation of the human personality we are forced to conclude that wherever there was a human being there must have been private property. But how are we then to explain the fact that there still are countries in which it does not exist—for example, in parts of Russia and other Slavic countries, and in Java? Perhaps these Slavs and Javanese are not men at all, but merely anthropoid apes. In the absence of proof of this we are compelled to consider the non-existence of private property among them as the most decisive refutation of the theory that individual property is a nesessary derivative of the human personality.

The theory that property is the legitimate reward of human labour is more widely accepted at the present time. This doctrine, first advanced by Locke, was accepted by numerous jurists, and was reiterated by Thiers in a prolix oration which he devoted to an apology for property.

Of a truth, Thiers had good ground for proclaiming that property was based on labour—he who had accumulated such a goodly fortune, at the price of arduous work and favourable combinations, which have been faithfully chronicled for our edification.

When this great man was a minister, not a day passed but his father-in-law sent to inquire after the health of his daughter and his son-in-law, a touching attention deserving of rich reward in this life and in the world to come. Sometimes—and is there anything strange in this?—the messenger was told that the daughter and the son-in-law were well, and at others that they were not as well as could be wished; in the former case the father-in-law, elated by the good news, hurried to the Bourse and bought furiously, while in the second, depressed by the uncertain health of his dear ones, and seeing all things through a yellow glass, he sold madly, wildly. Now note the remarkable coincidence. Fate, apparently desiring to reward the solicitous father-in-law for his devotion, crowned his operations with such success that he quickly accumulated a colossal fortune for himself, his daughter and his son-in-law—a majestic monument, like the pyramid of Rhodope, to property created by labour.

However, disregarding this innocent episode in the life of a great philosopher and statesman, it is scarcely necessary to say that the thesis is brutally refuted by the facts. Like the Greek philosopher who replied to those who denied motion simply by walking up and down, to those who claim that labour is the source of property, we have only to point to contemporary society absolutely to disprove the assertion.

Never has the separation of labour and property been more complete, absolute and irremediable than it is at present; the words labourer and pauper are practically synonymous. Labour, far from being the source of property, is now the normal complement of the absence of property, while the concomitant of property is idleness. Work, instead of being, as someone has said, "the father of property," is the father of poverty. "In our society," says John Stuart Mill, "the product of labour is almost always divided in an inverse ratio with the labour performed; the lion's share falls to him who has never worked; a considerable part is allotted him whose labour is almost nominal, and so on; in this manner the remuneration decreases in proportion as the work becomes painful and repellent, until finally the most crushing physical labour can scarcely secure enough for its maintenance."

Confronted by these facts, how is it possible to say that contemporary property is based on labour? Again disregarding the actualities and resorting to *a priori* reasoning, it is easy to see that labour in

itself establishes and maintains a right to property only while the owner works effectively, and only so long as he works—or, in other words, labour is not the progenitor of property but merely its inseparable mate. Furthermore, according to the theory we are discussing, as soon as a man ceases to contribute his share of the work of production it would be proper to deprive him of his property. This doctrine therefore seems to be a very uncertain support for the property right; instead of strengthening, it helps to demolish it.

Finally there is a more recent theory, which has been advocated chiefly by socialists of the chair, especially by their illustrious leader, Adolph Wagner, who affirms that property finds its origin in the law—that it is the will of the people; that it exists only so far as the law permits it to exist, and that, consequently, by legislative enactment it may cease to be.

The mistake these theorists make is that they do not ask whence comes the law. The law of a people is never a *prolem sine matre creatam*—a child without a mother; there always is a cause, a generating phenomenon, and in this case the cause is the economic factor. Instead of the law moulding economic relations according to its will, economic conditions make and shape the law; the law, therefore, far from creating property, is itself fashioned by property in its own image, and therefore in its development it docilely follows the evolution of property.

A brief study of the history of property will show

that it is formed by a natural process of which the State is an impotent spectator; anyone who will take the trouble to analyse property will see that it secures rent for the owner independently of any work of his, and that the State plays no part in the usurpation.

Facts, therefore, refute in the most convincing manner the theory that property is derived from the law; we consequently are forced to regard this doctrine, which is now defended with such pomp of learning, merely as one of the thousand expedients to which the human intellect resorts to avoid the necessity of a painstaking investigation of the primal causes of phenomena.

We find that none of the philosophic doctrines advanced in defence of property resists even the most elementary analysis. In addition a more general and decisive objection may be opposed to them, or to the method they follow, in that they misrepresent simultaneously both the problem and the criterions which might assist in its solution. Juristic philosophy especially distorts the problem of property, since it assumes for the subject of its investigation an entity—absolute, metaphysical, invariable, and wholly refractory to the transformative forces of history. It speaks of property without taking into account the fact that it is simply an abstract category, a mere name which serves to designate the most varied forms of appropriation, from the property of Cincinnatus to that of the Duke of Westminster, who enjoys an annual income of several hundred thousand pounds sterling. Long

ago Spencer observed that it was absurd to discuss property as if it were an absolute category, grouping under one denomination, and one theory, the property of the savage, whose bow and arrow constitute his entire estate, and the property of the worthy sons of Albion, who own American stocks, Continental bonds, banks in Great Britain, and lands in Australia and Zanzibar.

Lasalle also called attention to the fact that it is impossible to regard property, inheritance, crime, contract, etc., as absolute and unchangeable categories; and that Oriental, Greco-Roman, Mediæval and modern property should be examined in the light of different theories. Marx, however, pointed out the differences more scientifically, showing the essential antithesis between capitalistic property and the private property of the labourer. The latter is the consequence of separate, individual labour, while the former results from the violent suppression of the second, and, instead of being identical with it, increases by its destruction.

In discussing the problem of property, therefore, it is understood that capitalistic property is meant —that form of property which permits one class of men to obtain without appreciable labour a large proportion of the social product. The property of the labouring man, the property of Cincinnatus, who with arduous labour breaks up a bit of glebe, is the natural result of human activity, and no criticism can ever destroy it; but property which arises independently of labour possesses an entirely different, a dangerous character, and it is

against this that the shafts of modern criticism are levelled.

Juristic philosophy commits a gross error when it affirms the existence of a law of nature, or an immutable principle of justice, in accordance with which civil institutions are to be judged. These eternal principles of justice do not exist. The various forms of law developed in the course of the centuries are merely historical products of their several epochs—that is, of the different phases of human evolution, and being simply the ideal reflection of property they cannot regulate it. Therefore the problem of the legitimacy of capitalistic property can be solved, not by recourse to the abstract principles of justice, but by a positive analysis of the causes which originated it and presided over its development. By this means we may decide whether the character of capitalistic property is mutable or immutable; whether this form of property is to pass away or whether it is to endure.

In analysing capitalistic property in this manner, history and statistics teach us that it is due everywhere and at all times to one and the same cause—the suppression of free land. As long as there is any free land; as long as any man who so desires can take possession of a piece of land, and develop it by his labour, capitalistic property is impossible, because no one will willingly work for another when he can establish himself, for his own account, on a bit of land without paying for it. Under these conditions the economic form consists in labour

owning its own property, small agricultural holdings, and independent artisans.

This economic form which prevents the exploitation of one man by another, also prevents combinations of labour and consequently obstructs the development of production. Proprietary labourers would not spontaneously unite because such action would be contrary to the spirit by which they are animated.

Therefore at a certain stage in economic development, when increasing population demands a greater production—this limited form of production must be abolished and supplanted by a more efficacious mode—one which would permit of the association of labour.

For a time the association of labour may, thanks to the despotic action of the State, secure possession of the soil and the instruments of production, and establish a strong association of labour—and such was precisely the mission of primitive collectivism—a powerful means of segregating the workers, who were becoming isolated.

This rude form of association of labour likewise soon becomes inadequate, and must be destroyed to make way for a more efficacious form of co-operative labour. Then it is that a handful of violent men—either geniuses or criminals, whichever you choose to call them—wrests the free soil from the masses, compelling them to work for their profit, and thus forcibly brings co-operative labour under their own control.

The abolition of free lands is brought about in

various ways, according to the density of population. When the inhabitants are few it is necessary to reduce a man to slavery to deprive him of his land; but when the population becomes dense the complete occupation of the territory is possible, and its seizure by a few is all that is necessary to render capitalistic economy permanent. However diverse the processes by which free land is suppressed, usurpation in some form is always the fundamental basis of property divorced from labour; of the division of humanity into a class of warriors and one of pariahs; a small class of conquerors and a vast multitude of conquered.

Even a hasty review of primitive history yields absolute proof of the correctness of this theory of the formation of capitalistic property. I might depict the violent destruction of the early commune, and, following Cicero's example, describe the plundering of the Sicilian land-owners, or, supported by Appian, tell you of the annihilation of the small proprietors of decadent Rome; I might describe the expropriation of the labourer and his reduction to slavery—which was followed by vassalage, and this in turn by the wage system. It is, however, unnecessary to seek the origin of capitalistic property in the morning of time, for we may study the process in a comparatively recent period.

In the Danubian principalities, as late as 1840, the same form of collective ownership of the soil prevailed that obtained in primitive times; then, owing to the pressure of increasing population, the grave defects of this antiquated system of land-

ownership and production began to be felt. The inconvenience of collectivism was no sooner discovered than the usurpations on the part of the more powerful and the more greedy commenced, and they did not cease until collectivism was completely eradicated.

As it was impossible to wrest the land at one stroke from its communal owners—who had held it for centuries—it was necessary to find some less drastic means; the land consequently was divided into three parts, two of which were allotted to the peasants, and one to the proprietors, but this the peasants were required to cultivate without remuneration. Such was the manner in which capitalistic property arose in the Danubian States, and it still retains some of the characteristics of communism; therefore it resembles European feudal property. This form of property did not, however, wholly satisfy the new masters, who immediately began to devote their talents to the work of depriving the peasants of the two-thirds which had been left to them. The enterprise, although difficult, was well under way when it was abruptly interrupted by the revolution of 1848, when the rebellious peasants rudely demanded the return of their stolen lands. For a time it seemed as if the proprietors would have to yield, but, with the fine practical sense which distinguishes them, they persuaded the peasants that the most efficacious way to prevent another division of the soil was to address their complaint to a commission, and they succeeded in having one named, consisting of eighteen proprietors and an

equal number of peasants, which was to make arrangements for a partial restoration of the lands of which the peasants had been dispossessed—and this is where the difficulty began. In the interminable discussions in which the commission engaged, the proprietors, generous in theory, were practically unshakable; and while they affirmed, with much wealth of illustration, that the basis of property is labour, they hastened to add—I know not by what reasoning—that the peasants should be allowed to retain only just enough land to support themselves. The result of the debate was exactly what might have been expected. The revolution having been put down, and the peasants exhausted by the subtleties of the discussion, the commission was dissolved without having obtained any results, and the proprietors were thenceforth able to continue their usurpations, which did not cease until the last of the peasants was expropriated and converted into a proletarian.

In this way capitalistic property—with its unfortunate corollary, the proletariat—was triumphantly established on the banks of the beautiful blue Danube. In Roumania alone there are now 80,000 families of agricultural proletarians, who, as one of them said, do not eat spoiled corn, for they haven't even that; nevertheless, like the peasants of Lombardy, they die of *pellagra* in great numbers. They are forced to perform the most exhausting work by the *calarashi* or communal police, whom—as a delicate attention—the authorities place at the disposal of the proprietors.

I have selected the Danubian States as an example simply because there the process of the expropriation of a people, and the influence of this process in establishing capitalistic property, is disclosed in a more striking manner than anywhere else, and almost under our eyes. I might cite other examples, but I should be confronted by an embarrassment of riches. In fact, beginning with the thirteenth century, Italy, which gave the serfs their liberty in exchange for their land, and thereby converted them into wage-workers, to modern Russia, which took from its agricultural people the land they had held for centuries as communal property, thereby creating a proletariat hitherto unknown in the Czar's domain; from New Zealand to Germany; from India to France—all countries offer us the same spectacle: capitalistic property founded on expropriation, or, if I may use the expression, on the eradication of the labourer and on the suppression of free soil.

What weight, what significance, can the philosophical theories on the nature of property have in the face of facts so clear and so general? What is the logical conclusion to be drawn from these facts regarding the character, the *raison-d'être*, and the structure of capitalistic property? What do these eloquent facts teach us? They teach us that the origin of capitalistic property is not to be found in the law, but in the exigencies of production, and that its justification is to be sought, not in the nebulous realms of metaphysics, but in the practical, prosaic conditions of social life. The historical mission of capitalistic property, the justification of its existence,

consists in the fact that it is a powerful method of co-operative association of labour, which if free would be scattered or would have to be forcibly associated by the State, and in either case would be wretchedly unproductive. Precisely because it is a powerful method of associating labour, capitalistic property is a valuable aid to production and an important factor in civilisation.

But the same causes which, at any period in history, compel the formation and further the evolution of capitalistic property, inevitably lead to its disintegration at a later period of social evolution.

On the one hand, labour forcibly associated leads to constantly increasing unproductiveness; on the other the obstacles which for a long time have opposed the free association of labour gradually disappear, until finally the moment arrives when it is both possible and necessary to substitute labour voluntarily associated, which is more efficacious and productive, for labour forcibly associated by capitalistic property, whose product now has become inadequate for human needs.

At this point capitalistic property is destroyed and finally and irrevocably supplanted by the free association of the workers.

The theory of property which I have just briefly summarized is only a rigorous application of the principles of the historical school, whose victories in the domain of the social sciences are, in my opinion, incontestable. According to this school, property is neither a sacrosanct institution nor a product of robbery; it is a phenomenon. It should

neither be lauded nor anathematised; it should be studied in its genesis, in its mechanism, and in its inevitable evolution.

Only by applying to the problem of property the materialistic method, which is the glory of the natural sciences, will it be possible to analyse this complicated phenomenon, and to predicate its ultimate destiny; and, lastly, to discover the most efficacious means for hastening the advent of the final and adequate form of social life to which suffering humanity is eagerly looking forward.

CHAPTER IV

POPULATION

AMONG the social doctrines which have filled our century with learned controversies and philosophical arguments, none has found more valiant supporters and more determined adversaries than Malthus's theory of population. Received at first with enthusiasm and later bitterly denounced, it has continued, up to the present time, to be the object of serious investigations and erudite discussions. The reader, therefore, will not be surprised if, before examining certain more important questions, I devote some time to a discussion of a theory which has found both devoted defenders and bitter enemies.

The doctrine may be summarized in a few words:

The number of beings who may exist at any time, says the pastor of Haileybury, clearly is rigorously determined by the amount of provisions at their disposal; consequently if, at a certain moment, there is only food enough for one hundred persons, and a hundred and one are born, some will necessarily suffer from deficient nourishment. This lack of equilibrium between population and food is a constant and inevitable phenomenon in life, and not a rare or hypothetical one. For while the amount of

food available increases very slowly, owing to the decreasing productivity of land which has been long cultivated, and to the diminishing returns from capital too often turned, population, owing to the uncontrollable instinct implanted in every organic being, increases with unabated energy. The increase in the supply of food therefore follows at best an arithmetical progression, while that of population follows a geometrical one.

This disproportion between the increase in agricultural products and the increase in the number of human beings occasions a chronic excess in the number of mouths to be fed. Some of those who come into the world, finding no place at the banquet of life, are condemned to hunger and death—this law of nature therefore is the first cause of poverty, of the unequal distribution of wealth, and of social discord. This lack of balance is not, therefore, as radical writers maintain, the result of human institutions, of the creation of privileges, and of the existence of property; but it is a natural and eternal phenomenon, a manifestation of the Divine Will, to which man must yield, unless he heroically resolves to extirpate the evil by abstaining from reproducing his kind.

It is not difficult to understand why this doctrine was enthusiastically welcomed by the wealthy proprietors, since it offered them valuable and unexpected support. The poignant contrast between their opulence and the poverty of the masses may have aroused in them some scruples, some indistinct feeling of remorse; and the new theory

came most opportunely to dispel these clouds and to relieve the rich of all responsibility for pauperism, since it had been found to be necessary, and inexorably imposed by both natural and divine laws.

Malthus even advised them not to endeavour to find means to lessen the suffering, and he bade them stay their hands when a generous impulse or a sudden fear disposed them to offer help. "Charity," exclaims the pastor-economist, "why, that is absurd!" When the poor find they can count on the obolus of the rich they will cast aside the last scruple, which keeps them from marriage and procreation, and the greater the excess of population over the food supply, the greater will be the increase in poverty. Therefore away with all philanthropic societies, all organisations, and all laws intended to increase wages, for a rise in wages immediately impels the labourer to marry and procreate, which means a further extension of the curse of a super-abundance of mouths to be fed. Institutions which extend or increase the well-being of the people, which ameliorate their lot, are, therefore, harmful and reprehensible, since they render an excess of population still more certain. The working classes ought not to look to others for any betterment in their condition; they can secure it without external aid and prevent poverty simply by avoiding the shafts of Cupid — according to Townsend, another English clergyman, equally as well versed as Malthus in the science of population—therein lies the salvation of the labouring man. Is it

surprising that this doctrine was acclaimed by the rich and furiously attacked by the poor and their champions ?

In discussing a theory, however, science cannot take into account its effects, good or bad, on any one class of society. Truth being its supreme object, it should not judge the Malthusian doctrine by its practical applications or by the interests which these applications may hamper, or those which they may favour; and it should confine itself entirely to ascertaining whether the famous theory agrees with the facts; this is the only object which a scientific investigation of this, or any other question, can properly have.

A dispassionate examination will at once discover the fundamental error in the Malthusian theory. In regarding the limited increase in agricultural production and the unlimited increase in population as the effects of two laws—one physical and the other physiological—the English theorist entirely misapprehended the real character of the phenomena which he sought to elucidate.

It is true the production of food increases very slowly; moreover, the slowness of this increase was especially noticeable before America began to add her immense supplies to the market, and at the time when Malthus wrote it was strikingly evident. Having established the fact, he hastened to find its cause in the sterility of the land, the parsimony of Nature—an easy explanation, and one to which those who are reluctant to undertake a profound analysis of phenomena always resort.

The slow increase in agricultural production, however, is not due to infertility of soil, but to a series of juristic and economic institutions which interfere with and diminish the productiveness of agricultural labour. The large amount of land left uncultivated by proprietors deprives society of the products which it might supply ; in addition the arable lands are almost always leased for short terms in order that the owners may increase the rent at brief intervals.

Agriculture at the present time, therefore, is usually conducted by tenant farmers—that is, by persons having no special incentive to devote their capital permanently to the cultivation of the soil, as they know that the capital will be confiscated by the proprietor at the end of the term. Therefore in all countries in which the rent system obtains, extensive farming, which impoverishes the soil, prevails, and is followed not only by a decrease in product, but also by a gradual deterioration of the product itself.

In countries where lands are not leased for money, farming is carried on by poor and ignorant metayers, or by the owners themselves with the help of paid labourers who are half-hearted and inefficient, as they usually have no direct interest in the crop, and consequently no material concern with the success of the enterprise.

This series of essentially economic and juristic influences reduces agricultural production much below its natural limits. This fact appreciated, it is plain that we are not warranted in ascribing

an excess of population with respect to the available food supply to a natural and unavoidable law, since the inequality would disappear with the removal of the checks upon the productive efficiency of the labour and the capital employed in agriculture.

"But," the Malthusians ask, "if you could eliminate these obstacles and give free rein to all the forces of agricultural production, would you ever be able to prevent an excess of population? Your reform, it is true, would for a time supply means of subsistence to more persons than can be maintained at present, but, impelled by the irresistible instinct of procreation, human beings would multiply more rapidly than the quantity of provisions; and the excess of population, which had temporarily been eliminated, would immediately reappear in obedience to a law of nature."

This objection would be unanswerable if Malthus were correct in affirming that increase in population is the result of a law of nature—this is his fundamental error. Doubtless human beings for the most part do procreate without restraint, a truth especially obvious in Malthus' day. Here again the profound ecclesiastic, having noted the fact, was too ready to accuse Nature of improvidence. To discover his error it was only necessary for him attentively to study the society that swarmed about him. He would have found that this society, even from the point of view of the phenomenon in which he was interested, instead of being a homogeneous whole, was divided into two essentially distinct classes—one composed of the poor, the

wage-workers, the proletarians and the criminals, who multiplied ceaselessly and without restraint; the other, comprising the land-owners, the capitalists and those persons more or less closely associated with capital, who, as a rule, had only two children each; and he would have seen that while the population increased rapidly in one of these divisions of society, in the other it remained stationary or even decreased. This would have forced our worthy doctor to doubt the truth of his natural law of population—for of what validity is a natural law which does not affect all classes of society equally? Moreover, if he had observed that all the most prolific belonged to the same social class, whose conditions of existence are diametrically opposite to those of the class in which the increase in population is less, he would have been forced to conclude that the measure of this increase, or, if I may use a mathematical term, the coefficient of fecundity, is not to be sought in man's physiological nature, but in his economic condition; and in it he would have seen, not the effect of a natural law, but the result of a social one, which, far from being eternal and immutable, varies according to the distribution of wealth among the different classes of society. The good pastor would have discovered that it is not mankind as a whole, but the proletarian, the wage-worker, who brutally abandons himself to unrestrained procreation, because his pitiful earnings, variable and uncertain, render him improvident and deprive him of all sense of human dignity.

Where Malthus saw two natural laws—one re-

stricting the production of food, the other inducing a superabundance of human beings—we find that there are actually two laws which are essentially economic, or rather two antagonistic aspects of the economic system based on wages. On one hand this system retards the expansion of the productive forces and confines the increase of agricultural production within fixed bounds by eliminating one of the factors of production—either land, labour or capital; on the other hand it destroys the continence of the masses by forcing the labourer to accept miserable wages and reducing him to a degraded standard of life. These two antagonistic effects of the economic system based on wages—limitation of agricultural production and excitation to procreation—necessarily lead to a chronic excess of population, which Malthus believed to be due to a law of nature.

Precisely because it is owing to economic factors peculiar to the wage system, the excess of population is an essentially historical phenomenon, unknown to the other forms of social economy. We search in vain for an excess of population during the Middle Ages, in feudal times and in the period of the artisan guilds; then there was always an excess of food with respect to the number of human beings; and the labourers, even the beggars, lived well, *comiendo mucho carne y poco pan*—eating much meat and little bread—as a Spanish ambassador wrote to his sovereign.

In Russia, which represents, or did represent forty years ago, contemporary Mediævalism, the popula-

tion in many parts decreased under slavery. The serf, proprietor of his little plot of land, and well provided for, was careful not to compromise his economic position and that of his children by having too large a family. But when serfdom was abolished by law in 1861, and the serf was converted into a wage-worker, improvident and brutal procreation became general also in Russia; and as agricultural production was limited by a defective economic system, the Little Father's empire became familiar with the poverty which is the concomitant of a chronic excess of population. In Russia, therefore, a law of Alexander II. was all that was necessary to render the law of Malthus operative. Nevertheless, the high priests of orthodox economy in the Russian universities continue to regard Malthus' theory as an inexorable law affecting all peoples at all times.

From Russia, let us pass to France, which, as is well known, from the view point of population, is a sort of demographic riddle, which statesmen and economists are striving to solve. There the *crescite et multiplicamini* finds no application in daily life, for the population remains stationary in some departments, and is actually decreasing in others. The most singular reasons have been given for this strange phenomenon. An Italian anthropologist, M. Sergi, maintains that it is due, as is also the extinction of the autochthonous races of Tasmania, to organic deterioration. What could the Tasmanians and the French have in common? It is a well-known fact that the indigenous races of Oceanica are disappearing before the superior races

of Europe. On the other hand, a French anthropologist, M. de Lapouge, maintains that the infecundity of his race is due to the fact that it is composed largely of hybrids. "The French nation," he states, "was produced by the crossing of two races—the *homo europeus* and the *homo alpinus*, which was itself derived from the *homo acrogonus* and the *homo contractus*. Now the hybrid is generally sterile, either owing to causes not yet discovered or to a cause under control of the will and very easily explained: conscious of the inferiority and impurity of his race he does not feel the desire and duty of perpetuating it." Thus, according to M. de Lapouge, is explained the decreasing population of France. Remarkable explanation! Its validity, however, depends upon proving that man in the ecstasy of the senses finds time to engage in profound anthropological reflections on the purity of his race, and the propriety and necessity of perpetuating it; it would be necessary to prove that these considerations—assuming that he has indulged in them—have some influence on human conduct at those moments in life when reason and conscience seem to be wholly annihilated; in the absence of this proof we cannot refrain from smiling at M. de Lapouge's theory—one of the most bizarre aberrations of naturalism with which our age has been entertained.

Others attribute the infecundity of the French to diseases of the man transmitted to the woman during the earlier years of matrimony and causing sterility—an explanation not very flattering to the

French nation; this, however, is as improbable as it is unproved. The innumerable French parents who present unmistakable evidence of good health and have only two children absolutely refute this theory.

All these absurdities, physiological, anthropological and obstetrical, would have been unnecessary —to the greater glory of common-sense and reason —if the cause of French sterility had been sought, not in organic but in superorganic factors, in the form of the distribution of wealth in France. Elsewhere small properties were long ago devoured by the great ones, but small holdings are still the rule in almost all the departments of France. Now the small proprietor, enjoying a modest competence and sure of the morrow, will not be as blindly prolific as the labourer who lives from day to day absolutely dependent on the capitalist, and who does not even know the meaning of the words providence and responsibility. The small landowner knows that he is master of his own fate and that he will attain a competence or sink down into poverty, accordingly as his conduct is provident or improvident; the force of circumstances compels him to observe habits of order and self-denial, of which restricted procreation is one of the results, one of the most evident manifestations.

It is a remarkable fact that those departments of France in which the number of children to a family is smallest are precisely those in which small holdings of land are most general; while the birth rate is much higher in the departments having a large wage-earning population.

It is, therefore, as M. Dumont says, the desire to raise oneself, to get along in the world, or at least not to fall back—this intense desire of the middle classes of both city and country—which renders the population of France almost stationary. Here again we have proof that it is absurd to ascribe unchecked procreation to a physiological law—to an irresistible instinct to which the human animal is a slave. Unrestricted procreation is induced, not by nature, but by social institutions; it must not therefore be imputed to a defect in things eternal, but rather to a temporary shadow which humanity casts on them.

An excess of population is, however, a phenomenon much less freqeunt than might be supposed. In fact, in order for it to occur the wage system alone is not sufficient; this system must have reached a particularly severe form; the labourer must be actually reduced to accepting the wages of hunger. It is proved that when the workman is insufficiently paid he procreates madly—a fact which has been demonstrated with the aid of convincing statistics by Passy, Villot, Cheysson, Levasseur, del Vecchio, Nitti and others. As soon as an increase in industrial production leads to higher wages, and the condition of the labourer rises above the low level in which he was barely existing, the increase in population is checked. At the same time enhanced production brings an increase in provisions to the market and the inequality between population and subsistence diminishes and finally disappears. The history of all civilised countries confirms this statement.

Agricultural machinery, the fertile soil of the western hemisphere, and improved means of transportation have thrown enormous quantities of farm products upon the markets of Europe and America; at the same time an increase in wages, due to the advancing productivity of labour, and especially to the energetic action of the trade-unions, has improved the economic and moral condition of the labourer and lowered the coefficient of fecundity—whence the fact that the population increases only in an arithmetical progression. The greater production of food and decrease in the number of births have brought about, as might have been expected, an inversion of Malthus' law.

The production of food is now increasing more rapidly than population and the farmers of both hemispheres are confronted by an excess of food production beyond what is required by the consumers. In fact, notwithstanding the enormous depreciation in the price of cereals, no purchasers are found and producers are compelled to feed a portion to their cattle and another part is distilled—otherwise they would decay in the granaries.

What then is left of this famous doctrine of Malthus, of this eternal, immutable law, which by its partisans has been regarded as no less certain than the law of gravitation? A dispassionate examination of the facts reduces it to the modest proportions of an episode, interesting but transitory, in the history of nations. It is valid for only that moment in the social economy when wages—only just instituted—are at the minimum. This causes a bestial

procreation just when the technical processes are in such an imperfect stage that the increase in agricultural production is very gradual. Malthus lived during one of these crises in the economic life, and in his famous law he raised the phenomenon of depression which he observed before him to the dignity of a theory. Mistaking the pathological manifestations of an epoch for an inevitable necessity, he built up his theory on such insecure foundations that it has been entirely swept away in the course of economic evolution.

It would be an anachronism now to speak of an excess of population in the Malthusian sense of the word. Confronted by an abundant agricultural production, an agrarian crisis, a limited increase of population—phenomena patent to all of us, Malthus' law has become a dead letter.

While there is no longer an excess of population with respect to the food supply, there is an excess of people with respect to capital. We must not lose sight of the fact that in our present economical organisation provisions infallibly, by the very conditions of their production, become the property of the capitalists or of the owners of the soil, who dispose of them as they see fit. Now it is conceivable that the wealthy may refuse to grant the workers, as wages, sufficient food for the maintenance of all. The total amount of food might be much more than enough to support the entire population, but in the case assumed a portion of the people, would either die of hunger or be forced to beg. To express the fact in a more

concrete form—the granary of the world contains more provisions than are required for the nourishment of all the inhabitants, but the keys to the garner are held by the rich. If it pleases them to disgorge in the payment of wages a quantity less than that required to nourish the whole working population, it is clear that a part of this population would be condemned to death by starvation. If, moved by pity, or driven by fear, they draw upon their stock to furnish food to unemployed labourers, the latter, perhaps, would not die of hunger, but they would drag along a miserable existence in the depths of poverty and crime. They would constitute a real excess of population, not an excess, it is true, in comparison with the actual supply of food, but an excess with respect to the available capital, and one whose wretchedness is chargeable neither to the parsimony of Nature nor to exaggerated procreation, but to the limitations placed on the accumulation of the products, and to restrictions of various sorts upon the expansion of capital.

The dark cloud of Malthusianism having vanished from the economic horizon, we no longer ask why wretchedness and chronic poverty are still to be found; why the press refrains from speaking of the hordes of unemployed, who are pillaging and murdering throughout the civilised world. Certain influences, which it would require too much space here to enumerate, are progressively lessening the lucrative employment of capital under our present economic system, so that only a portion, which varies according to circumstances, of the fortune of the wealthy is applied to production.

It therefore follows that only a part of the existing population can obtain food in a normal way—that is, in exchange for honest labour; the remainder are compelled to beg or steal and are sunk in the depths of poverty and degeneracy.

If the actual excess of population is due exclusively to the restraints placed on the progress of productive accumulation, it is apparent that the only way to cure the evil is to remove these restrictions. Remedies which have not this end in view are necessarily inefficacious and harmful. What, for example, shall be said of those who advocate the introduction of nitrogen into the soil; of the use of electricity in agriculture, and of other more or less novel means for increasing agrarian production for the purpose of supporting the excess of population, or as, they say, re-establishing the balance of food? As if this balance were not already perfectly equilibrated; as if it were not annually met by a considerable surplus. Some also suggest various physiological expedients—the obscene abominations of the so-called neo-Malthusians—to limit population. Do they not see that there is no excess of mouths to be fed, and that procreation will of itself diminish with the amelioration of the condition of the working classes without recourse to loathsome and unnatural practices? The only efficacious remedy for excess of population is an economic organisation that will favour, instead of trammel, the productive employment of capital and also permanently ameliorate the lot of the labourer. When the supply of food destined for the maintenance of labour increases,

and when the labourers become less prolific, the population with respect to capital will cease to be excessive, as it long ago ceased to be excessive with respect to the available food supply. The present problem of population is neither agricultural nor physiological in nature—it is entirely economic; and only political economy, by demonstrating the possibility of a better social system, by broadly laying down the boundaries of this system and suggesting means for its realisation, can help us to unite the broken bonds between labour and capital, and for ever eliminate the social outcasts who are a shame and a menace to contemporary civilisation.

CHAPTER V

SOCIALISM

SIMULTANEOUSLY with economic science, which is concerned with the impartial study of the social laws of wealth, there has been evolved in the course of the ages an entirely different theory which endeavours to criticise in whole or in part the institution of property; to overthrow it or substitute for it a more democratic and equitable form of civil association—this doctrine, briefly, is socialism, which at the present time is exercising a far-reaching influence.

Socialism in its centuries of evolution presents several forms essentially distinct either quantitatively or qualitatively. From the quantitative standpoint we distinguish partial and complete socialism, accordingly as it attacks all or only one of the manifestations of property. For example, one of the forms of partial socialism is agrarian socialism which attacks land rent and seeks to abolish it with the aid of the single tax, at the same time declaring the profits derived from capital to be perfectly legitimate and inviolable. This form of socialism counts among its defenders Samter, a wealthy German banker, who attacks property in land, declaring it to be unjust and based on usurpation, while he pronounces movable property sacred and

inviolable—and this form of property is no trifling matter to a banker.

Still narrower is the socialism of Adolf Wagner, who would expropriate the owners of houses, but would leave the landed proprietors and the capitalists undisturbed. Again the Catholic socialists, a variegated aggregation of petty nobles, priests and school teachers, attack revenues derived from manufacturing and commerce, but declare the rent of landed property to be holy and unassailable. It is, therefore, as Nitti has clearly demonstrated, a one-sided and aristocratic form of socialism.

Antisemitism, which a German writer has described as the socialism of fools, attacks circumcised capital but defends and sanctifies the returns from baptised capital. Examples might be multiplied of this bizarre form of criticism which censures one form of social injustice while apologising for another kind which works to the advantage of its adherents, but the examples I have furnished will suffice to give an idea of the school.

From the qualitative point of view, on the other hand, socialism may be separated into two great categories, Utopian or fantastic socialism, which flourished from the most remote times to the middle of the nineteenth century; and scientific socialism, which sprang up at the end of this period and still thrives vigorously. We may therefore say that socialism in its movements responds rhythmically with those of economic science, to which it conforms as necessarily as the concave die does to the relief of the medal. "It is the same thing, except that it

is just the opposite," announced a wit, with more wisdom than is at first apparent. In fact, when the science of economics was still in the domain of the fantastic, socialism was wholly Utopian, and it was only when the former assumed a positive character that socialism changed and became a scientific and exact theory.

The origins of Utopian socialism are lost in the mists of antiquity; it may truthfully be said that socialism in this, its poetic, form appeared with the first tears that misery and hunger wrung from suffering humanity. Cognetti de Martiis, with his extraordinary erudition, has shown that there were socialistic writers in ancient China and India, who waged war gainst property and advocated its abolition. Indian and Chinese forms of socialism are not simply forms of Utopian socialism, they are types of partial socialism because, although they seek to equalise the conditions of the proprietors, they also allow, or require, the presence of a class of private owners and a pariah or slave caste. They even sanction a fundamental inequality between the proletariat and the proprietors and merely endeavour to prevent inequalities among the latter. It is easy to see that the reform demanded by these schools of socialism is of slight importance and that they involve a contradiction, because, if a basic inequality is admissible, if it is right that the proprietors should own everything and the slaves nothing, it is not unjust for certain owners to have more and others less.

The same may be said of Greek socialism, or of its most sympathetic expounder—the divine Plato.

He too admits and justifies slavery, and assigns artisans to a position of inferiority. In his ideal republic he has, besides the slaves, three classes: the people, the warriors and the magistrates. The products of the labour of the slaves and of the people is to be appropriated and consumed by the other two orders. According to Plato this is perfectly just and legitimate. In the two higher classes property is to be held in common, as are also the women. Plato opposes permanent marriages, substituting for them a sort of voluntary union lasting for a year, which, owing to the crossing of races, would secure superior offspring. Apparently fate is to regulate these ephemeral alliances, but the magistrates, by a patriotic device, are to guide the hand of fortune and arrange the pairing in such a way as to obtain the best progeny; in other words to apply to the human species the artificial selection which English breeders successfully use in raising sheep and cattle. Children are not to know their parents, but are to be placed in public asylums and nursed by public nurses; later they are to be educated at the expense of the State. Deformed children are to be killed and women past forty who conceive are to be made to abort, to prevent the birth of frail offspring. Such is Platonic socialism in its primitive and most uncompromising form. Later when Dionysius of Syracuse, who had summoned the philosopher to his court, refused to put his system into practice, Plato tried to temper and modify it in such a way as to make it more acceptable. In his work on laws he sketched a less radical reform,

one susceptible of immediate adoption which was far removed from communism and which might be introduced at some future time when men should have become wiser. Having reduced the proposed reform to a more practical shape, Plato asked permission to try it, selecting for the purpose some uncultivated lands in the island of Crete for his colony. Less fortunate, however, than Dr Hertzka, Plato failed to find pioneers willing to try his social scheme.

Plato's communism was attacked by Aristotle, himself something of a socialist, and was ridiculed by Aristophanes in his comedy *The Women Assembled in Parliament,* just as Richter caricatured that of Bellamy. The socialistic idea, however, was not killed by these satires ; it appeared again, first with the Stoics and later with Christianity in the person of the Master. Throughout his too short life, Christ was a socialist and His communistic theories undoubtedly led to His tragic end. Later, property was condemned by the Fathers of the Church no less severely than it had been by the Nazarene. For example, St John Chrysostom says : "Let no one call anything his ; mine and thine are lies." St Basil remarks : "Every rich man is a thief." "Riches are always the product of theft !" exclaims St Jerome. "The earth," declares St Ambrose, "was given in common to the rich and the poor, therefore why do ye, the wealthy, believe it to be your exclusive property ? Nature made it a common right ; usurpation has made it a private right."

These statements of primitive Christianity served as the inspiration of sentimental socialism which developed during the Middle Ages and in the first centuries of the modern era. Among its strongest champions was Thomas Campanella, a Neapolitan friar, who in the "City of the Sun" describes a communistic organisation which was to mould society on the model of a cloister and which was adopted by the Jesuits a few centuries later in their settlements in Paraguay. Giordano Bruno also defended the communistic ideal, while Thomas More, Chancellor of England, reproduced Plato's "Republic" in his "Utopia." Like his master, however, he recognised and sanctioned slavery, but differed from the Hellenic philosopher, in that he excluded community of women, limiting himself to requiring betrothed persons, before marrying, to examine each other in Nature's garb so they might assure themselves that the other was free from physical defects. More's work, however, did not advance beyond the sphere of partial and Utopian socialism, although it contains a remarkable criticism of economic conditions in England, and especially of the spoliation of the peasantry by the great land-owners.

French socialism, which attained its most flourishing period toward the end of the eignteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth, was equally devoid of all positive and scientific character. The Revolution, which brought forth so many intellectual flowers, gave birth to a most varied swarm of socialistic ideas, which promptly reached maturity. At this time we meet Mably, Morelly, Brissot de

Warville, Cabet and Fourier, the latter half madman and half man of genius, who proposed to divide society into phalanxes—immense organisations, each of which was to contain two thousand persons. Fourier modestly compared himself with Newton, claiming he had found the key to the social system thanks to an apple, just as Newton had discovered the law of universal gravitation, by the same agency. "History," he says, "will commemorate four immortal apples: two, those of Adam and of Paris, caused evil; while two, that of Newton and my own, produced good." Having noticed that in the country a few cents would purchase a hundred apples, while at the Février Cafe in Paris only a single one could be had for that sum, "I was led to suspect," says Fourier, "the existence of some fundamental defect in the economic mechanism; from this circumstance were born my meditations and my discovery."

The discovery which Fourier thought he had made, and which he compares with Newton's famous law, was the well-known theory of *attractive labour*. Fourier believed that certain labour, which now is regarded as a punishment, would become so agreeable in his phalanxes that it would be performed with delight and that it would be necessary to employ force to compel the workers to desist. Even the most revolting work would be attractive because it would be left to the children, who, as everyone knows, find the greatest pleasure in making mud pies. In the new social order, property was not to be abolished, but the State was to determine what

part of the product was to go to labour, what part to the skilled workers and what proportion to capital. Thus the practical effect of Fourier's system was a legal tax on salary and interest, not unlike that which obtained in the Middle Ages. By virtue of this reform miraculous results would be secured; the average life of man would be extended to one hundred and forty-four years; the taste of sea water would become slightly acid and very agreeable; lions and sharks would be domesticated; the Arctic circle would be warmed by the aurora borealis, etc., etc. A check would be placed on the growth of the population thanks to the sterilising influence of love in public, to the strength of women, and to a diet unfavourable to procreation. Regarding this last idea of Fourier, it is not far removed from some of those which now prevail in certain schools of sociology; for example Herr Bebel himself, having critically studied, in the light of his varied erudition, the problem of excessive population, finds nothing better to suggest, as a remedy than a certain lard soup, which, it seems, has an anti-generative influence upon the population of Upper Bavaria.

Saint Simon's socialism is no less one-sided and Utopian than that of Fourier, for it also allows property a certain proportion of the product, to be determined, not by free competition, but by the Supreme Father—a sort of industrial pope, who is to distribute the social product in accordance with the formula: to each one according to his capacity; to each capacity according to its work. Nevertheless in the writings of Saint Simon profound

observations are to be found on the phenomena of economic life; the history of property and industry, and on the political influence of wealth, together with a mass of philosophical observations—which accounts for the influence of this doctrinaire and his brilliant host of disciples.

The same may be said of Pierre Leroux, of Lamennais, of Louis Blanc, a keen critic of competition and a conscientious historian of social evolution—and of Proudhon himself, the original mind who summed up his attack on property in his famous epigram: *La propriété c'est le vol!* Proudhon, however, was no less opposed to communism than he was to property, and far from advocating, like the communists, the intervention of the State, he demanded its abolition and in its stead complete anarchy. For actual property Proudhon wanted to substitute *possession*, but just what he meant by this he was unable to explain. As practical means to escape from the intolerable conditions of the present he advocated the establishment of a bank of exchange which was to lend working men, without interest, inconvertible paper money, thus at one stroke eliminating both profits and interest on capital. Before this plan of Proudhon's could be realised its author was condemned to prison for three years, in his quality of director of the socialistic organ, *Le Cri du Peuple*. Had Proudhon's plan been carried out, however, it would certainly have proved a failure, for no producer would have been willing to exchange his wares for the bits of inconvertible paper issued by the bank; consequently,

the labourers who received these notes as loans would never have been able to convert them into useful objects, or into capital. On the other hand, if the bank-notes were made convertible, a metallic reserve would have been necessary, or the bank would have been compelled to receive deposits—consequently loans could not have been made gratuitously, for interest would have to have been paid to the depositors. Capitalistic economy would not, therefore, have been greatly disturbed by the new institution.

In addition to Proudhon's systematic sophistry, the incoherence of his ideas, his innumerable subterfuges and tirades are specially offensive; and what is still worse is his servility with respect to the ministers, and his attempts—always unsuccessful—to render himself acceptable to the powers that be and thus obtain some office; and, finally, the foolish petulance which dominated him. "Would to God that I might find a publisher," he wrote Bergmann, 22nd February 1841, "then the nation would be saved." "The Government must accept me," he wrote the following year, "and then my career will be a brilliant one." A career, an employment, a small place in some bureau—such was the dream of this theatrical revolutionist throughout the reign of Louis Philippe, while later, during the Second Empire, his one hope was to secure a senator's chair. Still, notwithstanding his many errors and his incredible moral weakness, Proudhon deserves a distinct place in the history of socialism, because he was the first to discuss social questions and bring

them before the tribunal of criticism and philosophy. His works are far removed from the absurdities of Fourier, Thomas More, Plato and Bruno. In them we find scientific criticism, while the splendour of his style is commensurate with his learning; we therefore must regard Proudhon as the most brilliant representative of socialism during the transitional period between Utopian socialism—whose luminous trajectory extended from India to France—and scientific socialism, whose greatest exponents are found beyond the Rhine, in Germany.

There, in the classic land of abstraction and reverie, socialism could not fail to find vigorous champions about the middle of the nineteenth century; in fact, toward the close of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the succeeding one, mighty adversaries of property and the social order appeared in Germany. The great metaphysician, Fichte, in his "Closed Mercantile State," gives us a complete system of communism; Weitling, the tailor, wrote socialistic works in such leisure as his trade left him and during the long periods which he spent in the prisons of the German confederation. We also find the philosopher, Karl Grün, applying the abstruse dogmas of Hegel to a criticism of the social order; while the poet Heine reserved a part of his many-sided genius for socialism; their writings on this subject, interesting though they be, belong, however, to the domain of the Utopian.

The true revolution in the history of socialism, the final passage of this school from the Utopian to the scientific phase, is due to Marlo, Engels, Rod-

bertus and Lasalle, the first writers to subject social phenomena to rigorous analysis and exhaustive criticism. Marlo, with the aid of his vast erudition, examined economic phenomena, insisting on the importance of the problem of population, and skilfully defending economic federations for carrying on industries, by working men's associations to be organised by the State. He, however, is a prolix writer, and one who never attains decisive results. With a master hand, Engels depicted the horrors of the English factories and the lot of their employees; he also wrote a philosophical criticism of capitalism. Rodbertus, with great profundity, developed the theories of value, of profits and of rent, and predicted with absolute certainty the advent of collective property—in about five hundred years. Lasalle, in an admirable work on the philosophy of law, attacked the right to bequeath property by will and brilliantly defended the theory of socialism, which, thanks to his vigorous propaganda, spread rapidly among the labourers of his country.

Still, however valuable the achievements of these writers, and however effective their work, it is not from them that German socialism draws its vital theories; and it is not to them that the new phase of modern thought owes its greatness, for there appeared in Germany a still mightier intellect, Karl Marx, the most vigorous thinker in the domain of social science since Ricardo. Besides an extraordinary knowedge of English economic literature, Marx possessed amazing dialectic skill and incomparable ability in the use of logic, history and

statistics. His "Capital," published in 1867, after years of study, conspiracies and exile, is a marvellous, a magisterial work, which entitles its author to a place among the great thinkers of the century; it is the most symmetrical and exhaustive book with which I am acquainted; it entirely eclipses not only the works of the earlier socialists, but even those of contemporary economists. The immense success which Marx's great work achieved among the peoples of two worlds is proof of the truth of my statement. Never, in fact, since the publication of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" had any other work in the domain of economic science caused such a sensation. Professors of political economy were indignant when they saw a dilettante, a sectary, though it must be admitted a man of prodigious learning, enter the arena and confront their slipshod, soulless, monotonous treatises with an organic work, palpitating, teeming with facts and ideas, and one in which the breath of genius animates a vast body of scientific material, marvellously elaborated and co-ordinated.

The young employees in the Bureau of Statistics in Berlin, in Dresden, in Rome, hitherto faithful adherents of the orthodox school, began enthusiastically to study the theories advanced in "Capital." The Russian Government, which had consented to a translation of the book, thinking its obscurity would prevent its being widely read, was startled at the effect it produced throughout the empire, and endeavoured, when too late, to throttle it by forbidding the public libraries to allow readers access to it. Meanwhile the French socialists, seeing the sophisms

of Proudhon put to rout by Marx's theories, ceased to look for the overthrow of the existing system and cast aside, as futile, the remedies they had hitherto so ardently advocated. Finally, the German socialists, the intellectuals, the restless working classes, hailed Marx as the destroyer of the existing social order, and gathered, as about a standard, around the mighty work which immediately became, and has remained, the Bible of contemporary socialism.

Marx enunciated three great ideas; one, the most notable, the complete dependence of political, juristic, religious and literary phenomena on economic conditions, does not, strictly speaking, come within the range of economics, but belongs to the more comprehensive field of sociology; while the two others are intimately connected with political economy.

Marx asserts that human society is controlled by an inexorable law of evolution against which all opposition is useless, and which determines the succession of social forms that are constantly becoming more complex and at the same time are approaching perfection.

The propelling element in economic evolution is the instrument of production; and it is the ceaseless transformation of this instrument which determines social changes. With each succeeding form of the instrument of production there comes a corresponding new social form, which is itself the basis of corresponding juristic, political and religious sytems.

In the course of the evolution of the instrument

of production a time arrives when the economic system built up on the previous form becomes intolerable and this economic system must be destroyed, whatever the cost. Thereupon follows a social revolution which removes the superannuated economic form and substitutes for it a higher or more efficacious one.

Broadly, four phases may be distinguished through which economic conditions have passed: the Asiatic, the classic, the feudal and the bourgeois or modern. The evolution of the instrument of production, however, has never, in the entire course of its progress, been arrested; and, continuing to advance, it will eventually render the future existence of bourgeois property impossible, and for it will substitute the collective ownership of the earth and the instruments of production.

This grandiose historical conception, which first introduced the idea of evolution into economic science, does not of itself lead to the socialistic conclusion which Marx wished to reach. For it may be said, admitting that humanity in the course of its development has passed through a series of entirely distinct social forms, and that the present economic form, therefore cannot endure for ever and must necessarily be changed into a different and higher form—what reason have we to suppose that this future form will be a communistic one?

At first sight no rule of logic seems to warrant this deduction; in fact, an entirely opposite conclusion is forced upon us. For, just as feudal property was transformed into bourgeois, without destroying it,

and even strengthening the principle of private property; so bourgeois property may survive and pass into another and higher form. To refute this it would be necessary to show that private property corresponds to no economic necessity and that the evolution of our society tends inevitably towards the equitable collective form.

This is precisely what Marx has attempted to demonstrate in "Capital." To prove his thesis he begins with a principle which had previously been enunciated by a host of economists in England and Italy, and according to which the value of commodities is determined solely by the amount of labour embodied in them. Now, continues Marx, if the value of commodities is merely the labour contained in them—if commodities are simply crystallised labour—it is clear that they should belong wholly to the labourers by whom they were produced; therefore no part of them must be appropriated by the capitalist, consequently he must secure no profit. If, however, the capitalist does obtain a profit, it is simply because he withholds from the labourer a part of his product. In other words, profits are due to the fact that the worker is forced to accept as wages the product of only a portion of his labour; while the remaining part of his labour, or the quantity of commodities in which it is embodied, is appropriated by the capitalist and constitutes his profits. Profits therefore are nothing but the materialisation of labour for which no payment is made, and are therefore an extortion on the part of the capitalist to the injury of the labourer or the working class.

This extortion is made possible by the fact that the capitalistic class monopolises the earth and the instruments of production, the remaining portion of society being for ever deprived of them. Proletarian humanity, therefore, being unable to live without working and unable to work without using the instruments of production, which are owned exclusively by the capitalistic class, naturally finds itself under the control of this body and must therefore submit to any terms it sees fit to impose.

But how did the capitalistic class succeed in securing possession of the earth and the instruments of production? Why are both owned by an insignificant minority of humanity? Because, Marx replies, this minority secured them by force and fraud, expropriating the independent producers. As late as the sixteenth century, he says, the prevailing economic form was that of small property holdings, both agricultural and manufacturing; and it was at that time that the feudal lords began forcibly to expropriate the small proprietors, while in the cities the manufacturers dispossessed the artisans; and, thanks to this twofold expropriation, a few usurpers succeeded in separating the labourer from the instruments of production and in creating a mass of proletarians who were able to keep body and soul together only by selling their labour to the capitalists for a ridiculous wage. To this forcible destruction of small property holdings, this monstrous spoliation of the labouring class, is due the genesis and rise of capital. But Nemesis awaits this society born of robbery, and Marx predicts its tragic end

with the words: "the hour of capitalistic property will sound and the plunderers will in turn be plundered."

Such, broadly sketched, is Marx's theory, which has been accepted by a vast legion of followers, an enthusiastic school, of which Bebel, Liebknecht and Kautsky in Germany, Aveling in England, Lafargue in France, and Turati and Bissolati in Italy are the best-known and most authoritative representatives. Thanks especially to the labours of these illustrious disciples, Marxism has superseded or absorbed all the other schools or rivals in cosmopolitan socialism, so that now it may be said that socialism is becoming completely identified with Marxism, and that the anarchism of Bakounine and the hybrid forms of eclectic or partial socialism are entirely overshadowed.

Thanks to this school, socialism has undergone a radical and wholesome change, having entirely abandoned the sentimental fantasies so dear to the Utopians of the past. Modern socialism, no longer concerned with social romances like Plato's "Republic" and More's "Utopia," and still less with the attenuated metaphysics of Proudhon, carefully analyses the phenomenon of production and seeks to discover the laws governing its processes. It has to do, not with the imaginary, but with science, philosophy, anthropology, history and statistics. It is, therefore, as far removed from what preceded it as chemistry is from alchemy, astronomy from astrology, and statistics from political arithmetic. It may in part be fallacious, and some of its theories

—especially the fundamental one, which reduces value to labour (to which anyone who desires to be received into the bosom of the Marxian church must swear as blindly as the neophyte does to the Thirty-Nine Articles, ere he is admitted to the Anglican Church) and which is imbued with the most vicious sophistry. Nevertheless, it is impossible not to recognise in Marx and his disciples a highly scientific character. Whatever the opinion one may have of socialistic theories, it certainly is no longer permissible for the economist to meet them with lofty disdain or silent contempt. If, however, we choose to regard the exponents of socialism as sophists we must not forget that the Greek sophists prepared the way for Socrates. Instead of treating socialistic theories with contempt it is far better to examine them in the serene light of dispassionate criticism, and to accept those which are true. The most orthodox economists, those most hostile to the spirit of innovation, the most reactionary, ought, at least, to recognise the fact that theoretical socialism may lend valuable aid in the hour of danger. I might go even further. I am inclined to consider political economy and socialism as two intellectual weapons, which, for a long time separate and mutually antagonistic, owing to the apologetic theories of the one and the subversive Utopianism of the other, are drawing closer and closer together as they become more human and the old animosities disappear. Perhaps the day is not far distant when the two forces will unite under one standard. I am, moreover, expressing neither a wish nor a fear, but

am merely affirming a truth which any impartial spirit may verify from his own experience, for we now behold economists and socialists, formerly bitter adversaries, fighting side by side in the field of the ideal, a fact which our fathers would have deemed impossible, and one which will become more frequent as time goes on.

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CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL DARWINISM

ABOUT forty years ago scholars began to apply to the study of the social and economic sciences a method which had been very successfully used in the domain of the natural disciplines, by the great pioneer, Charles Darwin; this method, which has been called social Darwinism, now demands our attention.

The theory of the relationship and the interdependence of the various branches of human knowledge is essentially modern and philosophic, and there certainly is no reason for rejecting the aid which one science may lend to advance the cause of another branch of learning. Formerly the various sciences were regarded as heterogeneous entities of entirely different aims, but a wholly different opinion now prevails—one much more advanced. It is now understood that the *species* of science, like the *species* of animals, are not absolute categories, but are purely arbitrary distinctions, and that all of them centre in the synthetic verity, which is the highest goal of the human intellect. We now know that a new discovery in any sphere of knowledge will have an immediate effect on all other branches of learning—a star appearing anywhere in

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our intellectual firmament will illuminate its most distant horizons.

Moreover this relationship between manifestations, seemingly most independent of each other, has never appeared more striking than it did in Darwin's investigation regarding natural selection. Nevertheless, it is well known, and Darwin himself admitted, with the modesty characteristic of genius, that the fundamental conception of the Darwinian theory was suggested to its author by Malthus' work on population. The modern theory of natural history, therefore, found its inspiration in political economy. As the natural sciences received from political economy the impulse which resulted in their great development, it is only just that political economy should, in its turn, profit by the later developments in the natural sciences. Therefore it is not surprising that both naturalists and economists have laboured to make sociological theories conform to the principle discovered by Darwin. There is, however, no doubt that this endeavour, while fruitful in many ways, is not beyond criticism, and that it would not withstand a searching examination. Reserving for discussion in another chapter those social applications of Darwinism which I believe to be warranted, I will here briefly call attention to those which I think are illogical and pernicious.

The Darwinian theory asserts that the supply of food is insufficient for the nourishment of all existing organic beings, and that they are consequently compelled to engage in a ceaseless struggle with each other to secure sustenance. In this

struggle the weaker necessarily lose, and being unable to secure subsistence, or at least not in sufficient quantity adequately to nourish them, are destroyed, while the strong conquer and survive; the species, therefore, being composed solely of the fittest individuals, continues to improve, and attains to conditions of life which ever advance towards perfection. This is the theory which sociologists hastened to apply to the phenomena of human association.

For centuries, therefore, man has been engaged in a titanic struggle for life, which at the present time is manifested in the mad competition we see about us. In the bitter warfare among human beings the victory likewise falls to the strong, and this victory is also a valuable factor in evolution and progress.

There is, therefore, no reason to deplore the cruel contests that take place among men, or the ferocious competition which forces them to try to destroy each other. This very rivalry secures the victory to the strong, to the most worthy; therefore, it is wrong to pass laws to mitigate the social struggle; this particular form of the contest is itself a valuable factor in progress; intervention on the part of the State could only be harmful, since it would result in securing the victory for those elements nature had set apart for destruction. In short all critical analysis of existing society, all condemnation of economic inequalities, is wrong, since they are simply the result of natural inequalities; economic inferiority is the indication and result of physical

or mental inferiority. Hence absolute passivity, philosophic indifference, the *dolce far niente* of the legislator, such is the logical course of conduct for the State which modern theorists have deduced from Darwinism.

These social applications of Darwinism are, in my opinion, wholly unwarranted and are due to a superficial study of the economic struggle for life.

A brief consideration of this vast phenomenon would show that the economic struggle, owing to various causes, materially differs from the animal struggle. The economic struggle takes place between man and man or between two beings of one and the same species; this is the first difference between the human contest and the animal struggle, which occurs usually between individuals of different species. There is, however, a more significant difference. While the participants in the animal contest fight among themselves with their own weapons to secure necessary subsistence, in the fundamental economic struggle between those who have and those who have not, the proprietary class, to secure a certain quantity of wealth, use in the battle the labour of another class. Now, given these conditions, we are no longer confronted by the Darwinian phenomenon of vital competition, but by an entirely different phenomenon which, however, finds a parallel, but an entirely different one, in the life of animals, the phenomenon of parasitism.

If, therefore, the relations of those who have and those who have not be considered a form of the struggle for existence it must be regarded as a

special form, identical with parasitism among lower beings which presents characteristics entirely different from those which mark the struggle between independent creatures. In the battle between the latter, the victory, except in a few remarkable cases, which I need not here enumerate, falls to the stronger and death is the lot of the weaker; the victory of the one and the annihilation of the other are necessary for the progress of the species.

In the struggle between the parasite and its host, however, it is the weaker that prevails—the parasite is always weaker than its prey. The fatal weakness of the parasitic being is shown by the fact that it can only secure sustenance by the grace, or at the expense, of another being. The ox-fly is weaker than the ox; the fly than the horse; the tape-worm than the man; the fungus than the plant or animal.

There is, moreover, another special characteristic of parasitism, which distinguishes it from the struggle between independent beings—namely, the fact that it can never lead to the death of the host, since its death would destroy the parasitic relation and render the existence of the parasite impossible. In short, while the victor in the fight between independent beings fortifies and strengthens his own organism, the organism of the parasite deterioriates and wastes away in idleness. Therefore the victory of the strong, the death of the weak, and the strengthening of the victor, or in other words the essential conditions which make the struggle for existence a factor in the progress and improvement of the species

are wholly lacking in the phenomenon of parasitism.

And yet the characteristics presented by animal parasitism are precisely those which we discover in the human fight for existence—in the ceaseless battle between those who have and those who have not. There are, however, several interesting differences between social and animal parasitism, but I will here mention only the most important one. Animal parasitism consists in the introduction of the parasite into the body of its prey, which rarely is capable of any resistance. It is, therefore, a spontaneous and irresistible process. On the other hand social parasitism can arise only by a process which deprives the prey of the possibility of producing anything for his own benefit, and at the same time compels him to work for the parasite. In spite of this and other differences social parasitism presents characteristics strikingly analogous with those of animal parasitism.

In the economic battle the proprietors are always victorious—and who would claim that they are the stronger, and the vanquished, the working classes, the weaker? On the contrary, in the economic contest the progressive force, the tenacious action of man against the resistance of nature, the labourers represent the vital element, while the proprietors represent the *otium cum dignitate*, the easy abundance, the comfortable inactivity. As to the intellectual and moral superiority of the proprietors which some so loudly proclaim—it would be as difficult for them to support their assertion with facts as it

would be easy for the most superficial observer to demonstrate the opposite. When, for example, we see a market boy, who was later a clown in a second-class circus, found an enormous diamond company, and take his place as an equal among the great potentates of cosmopolitan finance we become somewhat sceptical of the mental and moral superiority of the modern Crœsus. To disprove the old legend according to which the acquisition of property proves the existence of special elevation of mind or character, it is only necessary to glance at history which teaches us that in all ages property has been acquired by extortion, theft and robbery—and methods even more shameful. For example, all the French families belonging to the old nobility owe their fortune to the complaisance of their women, who docilely yielded to the caprices of their kings. Pagan Rome had no illusions regarding the methods by which property was acquired and Juvenal concisely remarks :

" Criminibus debent hortos, prætoria, mensas
Argentum vetus et stantem extra pocula caprum."

Early in the seventeenth century, Loyseau, *podestà* of Chateaudun, wrote a book to prove that feudal property was the product of usurpation and crime. The same may be said of the great fortunes of the present ; the captains of industry, who, as Marx says, have supplanted the captains of the sword, make use of means no less despicable than those which made the Roman freed-man the master of his own patron.

Goethe summed up the origin of property in the following brief dialogue :—

Teacher : Where did your father get his fortune ?

Pupil : From my grandfather.

Teacher : And where did he get it ?

Pupil : From my great-grandfather.

Teacher : And where did your great-grandfather get it ?

Pupil : He stole it.

Even if we admit that the proprietors are really the stronger, and that the labourers, the vanquished, are the weaker, the inferior, the analogy between the economic struggle and parasitism is none the less perfect ; the antithesis between the economic contest and the battle between independent animals is none the less striking. The latter accelerates the progress of the species, since it strengthens the strong and removes the weak from the arena of life. In the economic contest, on the contrary, exactly as in parasitism, the victors, the proprietors, do not recuperate their own strength, but allow it to degenerate in sloth and inactivity ; while the workers, precisely like animals that are the victims of parasitism and which are necessary to its existence, do not immediately die, but vegetate in a state of wretchedness until they prematurely perish of poverty and innutrition. Consequently the human struggle for existence, differing from the animal fight between independent creatures, and analagous to animal parasitism, is never a factor in selection and progress, but on the contrary is always a potent cause of deterioration and retrogression of the

species. Since the working class is the one which deteriorates most rapidly, and is at the same time the most prolific, the degenerate class in the economic struggle tends constantly to become, if not absolutely, relatively, more numerous, and therefore increases the degeneracy of the species as a whole. Exactly the opposite of this takes place in Darwinian selection, for it secures by the increase of numbers a furtherance of its own functions and enhanced successes, while human selection is interrupted and subverted by increase of population.

Let us admit that the first property owners, or those who founded fortunes, were the stronger or the more skilful; and let us disregard for a moment the effects—to which I have just called attention—of social parasitism. In this case the human struggle for existence, which at first would have a character analagous to the animal struggle, would necessarily acquire, with succeeding generations, a diametrically opposite character, thanks to a new factor—one peculiar to man—the inheritance of property, by virtue of which the founders of capitalistic fortunes hand down their wealth to their sons and grandsons to the most remote generation.

Admitting that the father who acquired the fortune was a superior being, a captain of industry and invention, what reason is there for supposing that the son or the grandson would be his equal? Modern anthropology, on the contrary, has demonstrated that the physical and intellectual gifts of the progenitors are rarely equalled in their descendants and that the offspring of great men—of the elect—

are apt to be imbeciles, doomed to the abysses of madness and degeneration. Who does not recall the celebrated character Zola—the Michael Angelo of the hideous—shows us in one of his best-known novels, the little blond duke who constantly boasted that he bore one of the proudest names of France and who had descended to such depths of imbecility that he passed nights pouring champagne over his piano for it to enjoy. It is, however, unnecessary to turn to novels to find examples of this moral ruin since daily life presents them by the score. No spectacle is more common and also more painful than that offered by the descendants of the great aristocratic houses, and they are well named descendants, for they do descend ever lower and lower, soiling themselves with vice, cheating at play, and a prey to tuberculosis and delirium. A traveller in the Iberian peninsula wrote that whenever he heard a grandee of Spain announced he was certain to see a deformed monster, sallow and rachitic. Another traveller remarked that in France when he beheld the members of the higher nobility he felt that he was in the midst of a society composed of invalids; the Marquis de Mirabeau in the "Ami des Hommes," described his peers as pigmies, and called them withered, half-starved plants. The English, who display, even in the most insignificant affairs of life, a profound common-sense, appreciate the decadence of the privileged families, and in consequence they require anyone ennobled by the king, as a reward for services performed, immediately to change his name, a wise custom, thanks to which the

name of the family is not disgraced later by the degenerate descendants of the noble.

These degenerates, however, by the sole fact that they inherit the wealth, inherit likewise the victory in the battle of life; consequently the contest, instead of assuring the victory to the strong, secures the triumph of the most abject and degraded elements. Therefore, if we admit that, at the beginning, the social struggle assured the victory to the strong we are compelled to add that the system of legal inheritance confounds and subverts the primitive relation between the strength of the conquerors and that of the conquered, and transmits the palm of victory to the less skilful and the weaker members of society. Colajanni compares this condition with two individuals engaged in a race, one strong of limb, but on foot; the other lame and deformed, but in a carriage; there is no doubt of the victory of the latter—but who would pronounce him the stronger, and the better runner? No one. His success is simply due to the fact that circumstances permitted him to have a carriage and denied one to his competitor. The system of inheritance is the carriage which bears the cripple madly along on the road of fortune, leaving the robust, who have nothing but their own strong limbs to aid them, far behind.

In addition to the fundamental contest between the two human species, the wealthy and the workers, there is also a bitter struggle among the components of the two species; the wealthy combat the wealthy, while the labourers and the poor contend with each other. At first sight it might be supposed, as the

victory in the war between men of different classes falls to the lot of the weaker, that, in the struggle between individuals of the same class, success would generally crown the stronger, the better endowed, but even this supposition is entirely upset by the facts. If we glance for a moment at the fight for existence which takes place within the proprietary class we find here also that it is the most sordid and base elements which conquer, and that fraud and usury generally decide the contest in favour of the more cunning. There is another remarkable influence that here again prevents the triumph of the strong, one due to a vicious circumstance peculiar to the human race, or to the action of the economic factor modifying or defeating sexual selection. Plato, who ascribed love to the union of wealth and poverty, would find that his theory was inapplicable to modern marriages, which are usually a union of wealth with wealth, and poverty with poverty. The economic consideration, now the controlling one in human marriages, causes an unnatural selection, and consequently degenerate offspring and decadence of the species. Who does not remember Gloucester's striking words in *King Lear*?

"Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,

My mind as generous and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue ? Why brand they us
With base ? with baseness ? bastardy ? base, base ?
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,
Got 'tween asleep and awake ? "

A view often confirmed by the physical and mental superiority of the illegitimate. How many of the great men of history have been bastards who far excelled their legitimate brothers ! How much superior was Don John of Austria to Philip II. ; Vendome to Louis XIII. and Gaston d'Orleans ! Mighty indeed were the bastards Dunois, Prince Eugene, the Constable of Bourbon, Maurice of Saxony, D'Alembert—all of whom were forced to accept the inferior position with respect to their legitimate and degenerate brothers. If these deplorable phenomena were frequent in the past, they are now still more common, because the spread of economic egoism and the worship of material prosperity have substituted a mathematical calculation for natural selection in the conjugal relation, often in direct opposition to the dictates of Dame Nature. This new and powerful factor differentiates human from animal selection and causes, in the case of man, further degeneration.

It might be said that at least in the mad struggle for existence which takes place among the individuals of the labouring class, it is really the stronger who

triumph and thereby obtain the greater portion of the food supply and condemn the less skilful to death; but how is it possible to maintain this when we see strong, efficient American workmen unable to compete with the degenerate Chinese; and the agricultural labourers of eastern Germany put to rout by the Poles and Calmucks; when we find women and children supplanting men in factories and forcing them out into the gutters; when we see that the most severe work, which can be performed only by the strongest individuals, is the most poorly paid? The most striking phenomena of modern life clearly prove that in the competition among the labourers victory falls to the weaker; moreover it could not be otherwise, for it is precisely these individuals that capital finds the most manageable, the most docile instruments, the most ready to obey its will—or because, to state the case more concisely, the parasite must attach itself to beings best adapted for exploitation.

Moreover how can there by any natural selection among the poorer classes when military service withdraws the most vigorous and healthy from normal procreation, thus leaving to the weaker the more important part in continuing the species?

We are, therefore, always brought back to the conclusion that the human struggle for existence presents characteristics entirely different from those of the animal fight; and that, whether we have in mind the fundamental contest between the proprietor and the dispossessed, or the struggle within the ranks of the wealthy, or within the labouring class, the

human conflict, instead of favouring the stronger individuals, always aids the weaker; and, far from being a source of progress, is the cause of retrogression and degeneration. To those writers—among them Ferri—who maintain, in spite of this, that in the human species the victory always falls to the lot of the more adroit, but that those best fitted to secure the victory in an evil environment are exactly the most unworthy, I have only to say that while this statement saves a formula, which is of slight moment, it does not save a doctrine; it saves the principle embodied in the Darwinian phrase, the survival of the fittest, but deprives it of all soul and life—that is, of its selective and ameliorative function, and for it substitutes a retrogressive and deteriorating action; therefore this statement, instead of refuting the conclusion we have reached, decisively confirms it.

This conclusion, which may, at first sight, seem unfortunate, should, on the contrary, be a source of congratulation, because it shows us that the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, which is an important factor in advancement among the lower animals, is among the human species a cause of decadence; it teaches us that humanity must not seek the leaven of its regeneration in the brutality of ceaseless warfare. That the lower species should be condemned to an incessant struggle; that this is the condition *sine qua non* of their progress, is intelligible and natural, but to human beings, and precisely because they are human and more elevated, this specific is no longer of any worth; this cruel remedy which is a factor of life and development for the lower organisms is, on

the contrary, for higher beings a factor of ruin and death, and mankind must seek the instrument of its advancement, not in battle and bloodshed, but in justice and pity. Why should we consider humanity eternally condemned to a fight for existence between the weak and the strong? Why should we believe that the human race, after struggling for ages with Nature and Fate, should be doomed to know no peace? History comforts us with the faith that a ferocious battle for life is not to be the eternal lot of humanity. It shows us the fight for existence—inhuman among cannibals—gradually becoming less savage; it teaches us that the field of human contests constantly grows more and more restricted. At one time man fought for the possession of woman; for the extension of a national religion; for a popular prejudice; for the caprices of kings or of royal favourites; later they fought for the expansion of trade; for the establishment of nationality; for the overthrow of tyranny. But now the only motives left for international quarrels are the vain ambition of some prince or the moribund rivalries of decrepit diplomacy; while the national struggle is becoming more and more restricted to economic and capitalistic competition. The stimulus to progress furnished by the struggle for existence is a necessary factor in social evolution only when more elevated and nobler stimuli cease to have an effect on human nature. So long as man's motives have no other purpose than self-preservation, and the satisfaction of his egoism, a condition characteristic of social infancy, warfare, incessant and ferocious, is the

necessary condition of initiative and progress. Whoever applies the evolutionary theory to the phenomena of the moral world will find ample ground for believing that the human character will improve and that man will advance without a ceaseless fight and without the slaughter of the weaker.

To me it does not seem Utopian to conceive a state of human society in which man shall strive for physical and moral perfection not with the barbarous aim of conquering less favoured adversaries, or of obtaining a more comfortable place at the banquet of life, but with the nobler ambition of developing all his faculties to the highest degree. There is nothing quixotic in assuming that the lofty sentiments which lead the student onward in his quest for truth, without thought of material gain, will some time become common to the whole species, and a part of humanity's patrimony.

Therefore, instead of standing idly by and watching the struggle for existence, or cheering the gladiators as the spectators in the Coliseum were wont to do—as the adherents of the Darwinian theory in sociology still do—we, knowing that the contest will end in the victory of the least worthy, and result only in evil, must endeavour to mitigate it and limit its field of action.

Instead of wasting our strength in a fratricidal contest we ought to combine to fight the one necessary and fruitful battle which will advance and expand civilisation—the fight against the resistance of matter. For the human contest we must substitute solidarity; for egoism, altruism; for rivalry, love.

To social charity, to State aid for the poor and universal brotherhood we entrust the *nobile officium* of alleviating human suffering and of bringing about the material and moral regeneration of humanity.

We must not acquiesce in the monstrous cruelty of Spencer and his followers, who would do away with all social legislation and state intervention in the interest of the disinherited, claiming that they are disinherited precisely because they are the weaker, and that the weak must perish. We, on the contrary, knowing that the defeat of the poor in the social struggle is due to economic conditions and not to a natural inferiority on their part, demand that the State shall come to their defence and shall at least alleviate their suffering.

In the contest which I have waged for so many years, and under so many different aspects, with social Darwinism, I have been able to cite in support of my views, an authority surprising to many, but whose importance none will deny, and that is Darwin himself. In striking contrast with the sociological intemperance of his followers, Darwin always explicitly affirmed that human progress was possible without a fratricidal, ceaseless warfare to obtain bread ; that the social struggle for existence materially differed from that of animals ; that it did not sanction the victory of the strong, but frequently of the more abject and degraded elements. In the last years of his life the great naturalist expressed a very pessimistic view regarding humanity's future, and he observed that natural selection did not take place among men and that the strongest did not survive.

In a letter to Fox dated 7th March 1852, Darwin expressed a strong opinion on the infamous conduct of the English proprietors, whom he calls " brutal beings, as hard as stone." and still these proprietors, according to Darwin's extreme followers, ought be regarded as the most capable among the capable, since they excelled all others in winning laurels and spoils in the battle of life. Darwin's great name, therefore, cannot justly be brought forward in opposition to my theory. His beautiful doctrine of the improvement and progress of the race is not destructive of all criticism or opposed to all reprisals, since social criticism and legitimate reclamations survive the most determined attacks of theory.

At first, it is true, the great conquests of the prophetic genius may be artificially rendered ineffective by conservative or reactionary designs; but it is promptly discovered that truth does not consort with injustice; that science, far from spreading its protecting mantle over wrongs, blights and kills them with its mighty rays. Agassiz' theory of the plurality of the human species was promptly used in America by the slave-owners to justify slavery; but it was soon discovered that his doctrine was, on the contrary, wholly condemnatory of that pernicious institution. In the same manner the Darwinian theory, adduced by certain sophists in justification of the contemporary economic organisation, has now become, instead, a mighty instrument of social reform and regeneration.

CHAPTER VII

EVOLUTION

THE great awakening in all branches of human knowledge which followed the contemporary triumphs of the natural sciences was as conspicuous in the field of the social and economic disciplines as in any other domain of learning. To them was applied the new and wonderful theory of evolution, which now plays such a great part in all departments of human research.

This theory, it is true, was advanced long before our day, and not by naturalists. It would be easy for carping critics to show that the doctrine had its champions in much earlier times, but, whenever a thinker discovers a truth, there is always some professor who discovers that it had previously been announced by someone else. In this particular case, however, it cannot be denied that the theory of evolution had been conceived and repeatedly stated long before, at widely separated epochs, and that a swarm of philosophers, the most brilliant of whom were Heraclitus and Hegel, had concerned themselves with it. Aristotle said Heraclitus had banished peace from the world since he had conceived all things to be in a perpetual flux—in ceaseless motion; while Hegel's "Logic," which has been

described by Bakounine as the algebra of revolution, because it regards all things as in a never-ending process of affirmation and denial, gives a more profound synthesis of evolution than does Spencer's "First Principles."

Hitherto the adherents of the theory of evolution have, however, represented only a small minority, while the masses, both the educated and the uneducated, continue to regard phenomena as immutable or at most as moving in an endless circle, according to Vico's theory of fluxes and refluxes.

The great achievement of the natural sciences was the exposure of the apotheosis of the motionless, and the generalisation of the theory of evolution, making it the common property of all students, of every science. This is why I have described it as an essentially modern doctrine, and why we owe so much in connection with it to the naturalists of the day, especially to Darwin, and his great rival, Herbert Spencer, who illustrated and amplified the theory.

The natural sciences, however, besides affirming the great principle of evolution, of the ceaseless movement, of things, announced, for the first time, the cause, the propelling factor in organic evolution, and demonstrated that the ceaseless transformation of species, or ascension to forms of life ever more elevated, is due entirely to the numerical increase of organised beings, the first cause and the essential condition of the struggle for existence. Modern science, unlike ancient, does not simply announce

a principle, but in addition it states the cause and explains the mechanism by which it acts—and this shows how it succeeded in impressing its fundamental dogma on all minds, having first stripped it of the metaphysical form which it had assumed in the past and which had made students indifferent or hostile to it.

The social sciences, which usually are slow to accept and apply to their own phenomena the principles of the natural disciplines, have, on the contrary, not hesitated to accept this illuminating discovery, and its applications constitute their greatest claim to glory; and now among their own principles they count these two fundamental truths: economic and social phenomena are subject to a law of evolution, and the soul of this law is the constant increase of human population. These two principles—which may be united in one—constitute the essential difference between modern and classic political economy, and the chief cause of its present superiority, as well as of its marvellous progress.

Nevertheless, while accepting the principle of evolution from the natural sciences, political economy did not hesitate to introduce into the principle itself such modifications as were rendered necessary by the special nature of its own researches. Kant's statement that the various forms of evolution, from astronomy to sociology, present not only different phenomena, but also different laws, is confirmed by this particular case. No sooner do we apply to political economy the principle which the natural sciences introduced, than we find that it must

be materially modified. In the life of inferior beings evolution takes place as a result, not only of the increase, but also of the *excess* of population with respect to the existing food supply. In order that there shall be an improvement of the species the quantity of provisions must be insufficient for the support of the individuals existing at a given moment. Insufficiency of food is the sole cause of the struggle for existence and of the survival of the more adroit, the extinction of the weak, and the betterment of the species. If the quantity of food were sufficient for maintaining all existing creatures, there would be no contest among them, no victory of the strong, and therefore no improvement of the species.

When we examine the conditions of life among human beings, however, we immediately discover a radical difference between them and the lower animals. While the food of the latter is gratuitously furnished by nature and cannot be increased by them, human sustenance, except during the primitive, idyllic period, is produced by labour and may, therefore, be increased, but ever under more difficult conditions, and only with a relatively greater expenditure of strength, since the increase can only be secured from land hitherto uncultivated or less fertile, or by the application of additional capital to the cultivation of lands already in use—and successive increments of capital thus applied are relatively less productive. From this new state of affairs which is peculiar to man, arises a serious consequence; among the lower orders an

increase in the population—which can never enhance the food supply—is never a factor of progress, while among the human species an increase in numbers is always a factor in progress, even when it causes an inequality between population and the available food supply, because, imposing the necessity of augmenting the production and therefore of combating the constantly increasing difficulties opposed by inert matter, man's inventive genius is stimulated to seek new and more efficacious methods of production and better economic relations, to prevent the waste of capital and labour, necessary to enhance social production. Therefore, while the cause of evolution among animals is found to be the *excess* of population with respect to the food supply; a simple *increase* in population, whether or not an *excess* with respect to the food supply follows, is all that is necessary to provoke human and social evolution. In this we have a striking superiority of the human race compared with the lower animals. Among the latter, progress is secured only by slaughtering a part of the species; social evolution, however, depends upon no such sinister condition and it proceeds constantly and quietly without the perennial destruction of the weaker.

If we now ask how this vast stream of human beings, ceaselessly advancing from prehistoric times until the present, determines economic and social evolution we must not look to the naturalists or to the sociologists for an answer. The former have already fulfilled their mission with respect to the social sciences by furnishing them with the luminous

idea which was to rejuvenate them. It would be asking too much to require them to explain how the law of evolution manifests itself in the domain of the social and economic sciences.

Those who have tried to elucidate social evolution solely with the aid of the natural sciences have obtained slight results, a statement which applies to both neophytes and adepts. For example, Spencer, the great exponent of evolution who traced the law throughout its myriad manifestations, was abruptly halted by social evolution and nothing that he wrote of it was worthy of his great intellect. In fact, when he states that society proceeds from an indistinct homogeneity to a distinct heterogeneity; that all society at first is divided into two classes, one of warriors, the other of cultivators and manufacturers, to which later a commercial class is added, precisely as in the human organism are found the ectodermic, endodermic and mesodermic cellular strata; that the prevalence of the military element in society, like that of the ectodermic in the organism, represents an arrested stage of evolution and that this preponderance tends to diminish, and that the military organisation will be superseded by the industrial, he furnishes—it is true—the outline of social constitution and evolution, but he fails to grasp the real process. The evolution of an industrial society from a military society—an idea to which Spencer frequently returns—is not the most striking feature of human development, because these two social forms are not materially different—both being based on the capitalistic form of production and economy.

Societies of very different organic structure, Roman, Mediæval and modern society, are organised according to the military type. Of two societies equally developed and possessing the same essential characteristics, one may belong to the military type, and the other to the industrial, as is shown by the United States and Germany. This teaches us that the military organisation and the industrial do not represent two successive phases of social evolution, but two accidents, two external aspects of one structure. It shows that Spencer's theory of evolution does not go to the bottom of social phenomena, but only touches their surface, and that for political economy successfully to apply the new doctrine to the phenomena of human society, another method will be necessary. It also teaches us that increase of population is not, as Spencer tries to prove the sole cause of human progress ; and that we must also take into consideration those economic influences developed by increasing population which are themselves real factors in social transformation.

On the other hand, those writers who fall into the opposite error, analysing the economic fabric of evolution without taking into account the increase of population—which is its essential cause—obtain equally unsatisfactory results ; hence arises a group of theories of social evolution, which are immediately found to be untenable. For example, certain doctrinaires tell us that the secret of human evolution consists in the constant development of weapons of war, of military technique—the absurdity of the idea is shown by the fact that the manufacture of

weapons has had periods of arrestation and retrogression without interrupting the course of social evolution. To appreciate this it is only necessary to examine the collections of arms of the various ages preserved in the great museums—for example, in the *Musée d'Artillerie* of Paris—and compare them with the civilisation of the period when they were used. Others seek the cause of social evolution in the variations in the medium of exchange which give rise to three forms of economy—natural, monetary and credit. This likewise is untenable because the monetary system is a wholly superficial element in the social organism; because the natural economy sometimes precedes and at others follows the monetary economy—for example, we find monetary economy, which flourished in imperial Rome, superseded in the Middle Ages by the natural economy, only to reappear again during the Renaissance; and because, finally, the economy of credit does not represent the last stage of human evolution; moreover, it appears in the earliest periods of a people's development and in the latest. Still others distinguish three great phases of human evolution—the economy based on the *house*, on the *city* and on the *people*. This distinction, which adopts as criterion an architectural, topographical or political element, is of slight moment, since all of these forms of human association are found in the most widely separated historical epochs; for example, we find the economy of the city dominant in Greece, in Rome and in the Mediæval republics; and the economy of the people prevailing in the Roman period as well as in our own day,

although the economic structures of these two eras are essentially different.

Finally others discover the cause of social evolution in the development of the technical instrument of production. This standard also is worthless, because the same form of technical instrument reappears in the most widely separated epochs and is associated with the most diverse economic forms; frequently a highly developed technical instrument coexists with an arrested social form, and finally because the application of the instrument of production, far from being the cause of the economic constitution, is itself determined and fashioned by it. A single example will prove this. The European immigrants in America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when industrial technique was already highly developed in Europe, fell back several centuries in their new fatherland, returning to the rude instrument of the primitive ages. Although printing had been invented and carried on for a long time in Europe, the American colonists were obliged to content themselves with manuscript periodicals for many years. How then is it possible to say that the state of technical invention is the cause and the index of the social development of a people?

On the other hand we easily comprehend how evolution takes place in the sphere of economic phenomena provided we steadfastly hold in mind the simple premise that the ceaseless increase in population makes necessary the occupation and cultivation of lands ever less fertile, hence requiring more efficacious means of production to combat the in-

creasing resistance of matter. Given, therefore, a certain density of population and a certain degree of fertility of the cultivated land, there is rendered not only possible, but also necessary, a determinate economic system permitting human labour to attain a commensurate productivity; but population increasing, and the necessity of cultivating less fertile lands becoming urgent, the economic system hitherto existing becomes inadequate, since the degree of productivity which it permits labour is insufficient to combat matter now become more rebellious. As the economic and productive system which corresponded with the preceding degree of productivity of the soil has become incompatible with the new and more exacting conditions, it must be supplanted by a better system. Then follows an epoch of social disintegration which destroys the superannuated form from whose ashes a new structure arises; on the ruins of the shattered economic system is erected a new one which allows human labour to become more productive and is therefore adapted, for a time, to combat the increasing resistance of matter. However, with each additional increment to population a moment comes when it is necessary to bring under cultivation lands which are still more resistant, and for the development of which the prevailing economic system is found to be inadequate; consequently this system suffers the fate of those which have preceded it and it is in turn destroyed to give place to a new and superior form.

Broadly sketched and disregarding the numerous subdivisions, four great phases of social evolution

may be distinguished, which correspond with so many successive phases of the occupation and productivity of the soil. They are the economic systems based on collectivism, on slavery, on vassalage, and that based on wages. In prehistoric times, when the land was virgin soil, men cultivated it independently of each other because there was no reason for them to combine their labour and restrict their own freedom for the sake of increasing a product already sufficient. Therefore the dominant economic form at that period was based on independent individual labour—non-collective production, and to establish collective labour it was necessary to secure State intervention to bring about forced association among the labourers. Such is precisely the character and scope of the primitive community. But population increasing and the available land decreasing in fertility, this arrested form of production was found to be inadequate and it had to be supplanted by a more efficacious one. This transformation is brought about by means of a series of forcible usurpations effected by the more greedy members of the community at the expense of the others who are thus expropriated and compelled to work for the spoilers. As there is still free arable land for every one, the usurpers, to compel the expropriated to work for them, must forcibly prevent them from removing to the unoccupied lands—that is, must reduce them to slavery.

Thus slavery arises, not as the result of human villainy, or of primitive religion, but owing to the existence of unoccupied lands which renders the

capitalistic exploitation of *free* labour impossible —and forcibly associating the labourers, not under the weak and remote authority of the State, but under the ever-present goad of the private proprietor, slavery constitutes a decisive productive advance in comparison with the preceding economic form ; however, it also becomes intolerable when the constantly increasing population imposes the necessity of cultivating still less productive lands. Then the economic system based on slavery is violently overthrown and supplanted by a more productive economic form—that is, by feudal economy, based on serfdom. This too must suffer the fate of all economic forms, because it constantly becomes more onerous as the limits it imposes on production become more rigid, and as the necessity of cultivating less productive land becomes more imperative—hence it likewise, at a certain stage, must be destroyed or superseded by a more advanced economic form. The simple increase in human population, itself the original cause of the problem, supplies the solution of the difficulty. In fact the sterility of the new lands needed for cultivation makes it impossible for persons without capital to cultivate them ; therefore, those who have no capital are unable to establish themselves for their own account on any unoccupied land, and are forced, in order that they may live, to sell their labour to the capitalist. At this stage, therefore, it becomes possible for the capitalistic class to compel labourers, legally free, to work for them, and these labourers by virtue of their freedom, are much more productive than

either slaves or vassals. On the ruins of the economic system based on vassalage there is thus erected an economic system based on wages which is a much more productive form than any of the preceding.

This system powerfully aids the advance of technical science; brings about a great transformation in industry; stimulates international trade—in short is a potent factor in civilisation. However, by the inevitable effect of its immanent antagonisms its productive energies are soon checked, and the system becomes more and more intolerable as the necessity of cultivating the less productive soil becomes more urgent, until finally the moment arrives in which it is found to be wholly inadequate for the new and more difficult conditions of production, and it is inevitably destroyed, to be in turn replaced by a superior social form.

Thus the constant increase in the population is the primal cause of the evolution of the economic system, of the historical succession of social forms. This evolution therefore is the more rapid the more the population increases, or the quicker the need arises of cultivating the less fertile fields. Whenever the increase in population does cause a sensible decrease in the relative productivity of the land, taken as a whole, economic immobility is inevitable. Of this China offers the classic example. There the rapid increase in population is attended by no progress simply because it occasions no appreciable change in the conditions of agricultural production. On the other hand in those countries where rapidly increasing population makes the decreasing pro-

ductivity of the soil strongly felt, economic evolution takes place more rapidly and new economic forms are prematurely developed—forms which in other nations do not appear until a later age. Thus the irruptions of the barbarians and their superposition on the Italian population caused an unforeseen increase in the number of inhabitants which was immediately followed by a process of social decomposition and the supplanting of slavery by a more productive economic form—a change which did not take place in other nations until much later. So also the expulsion of the Huguenots from France and of the Moors and Jews from Spain, diminishing the population in those countries and increasing it in England and Holland, accelerated evolution in these countries—and it was in them that the wage system first appeared—and it developed in them more rapidly than anywhere else in Europe. On the other hand a decrease in the population occasions a corresponding social retrogression; thus the plague of 1348, decimating the population, brought about in Europe a return to the most barbarous forms of servitude; in Spain itself the depopulation caused by the events I have mentioned above occasioned the return of the economic forms of feudalism, while in Sardinia the decrease in population caused a return to the technical instrument of the early Romans.

It may be stated as a general truth that the dissimilarities among peoples, usually attributed to racial divergences, are merely owing to different rates of increase in population which occasion corresponding variations in the rate of social evolution.

Such, broadly sketched, is the evolution of human economy. It shows us a vast panorama of succeeding social organisms, each of which appears as the product of a certain historical degree of density of population; each develops until it reaches its maximum and disappears when the population attains greater density. The succession of economic forms may be compared with a chain of mountains each one of which is a little higher than the preceding one; and, in order to reach the next higher, the wayfarer is compelled to descend and cross the intervening valley.

Thus Humanity, the tireless pilgrim, cannot ascend to a higher form of life until it has descended into the valley of the existing economic form. It is, in fact, a series of parabolas which social evolution places before our eyes, an incessant building up and breaking down.

Now—a truly wonderful fact!—social evolution, thus traced, presents a marvellous analogy with all the other forms of evolution taking place in the universe—astronomical, geological and biological—forms discovered by Laplace, Lyell and Lamarck.

Celestial mechanics teaches us that the planetary system, far from being immutable, as Newton supposed, is constantly changing, and that the life of the stars, like that of organic beings, inevitably follows a parabolic course. The nebulæ, bodies of incandescent gaseous matter, which filled all space at a time, which for the sake of convenience we will call the primitive period, by losing their heat became solid in their outer layers and crystallised into

stars, suns and planets revolving about the heavens. From the continuous gravitation of bodies once scattered in space, however, arises the necessity of their reaggregation, the inevitable collision of the dispersed stellar bodies; this in turn causing the arrestation of the stars, and the transformation of their sensible motion into imperceptible motion causes the rediffusion of the matter or the re-transformation of the star into incandescent gaseous substance. Thus the star, the issue of the nebula, again becomes a nebulous body, only in time to become a star again; exactly as the new social form, evolved from the decomposition of the preceding, is, in its turn, destroyed to give place to a higher structure.

Geology teaches us that the insistent, ceaseless, disintegrating action of the rain and the wind, of the glaciers and the rivers, is constantly changing the condition of the earth; and, carried on through countless ages, produces great telluric cataclysms which materially alter the face of our planet—hence the mighty geologic revolutions which are merely the effects of causes continually at work on the surface of the earth, and which sharply separate one phase, one epoch of life, from the following; precisely as the great social revolutions, the results of a cause always at work, the ceaseless increase of population, divide human phenomena into distinct cycles, and themselves constitute the intermediate stages between one historic form and another later and better.

In conclusion, when we turn to biologic evolution,

and study not only Darwin's theory but also those of his predecessor Lamarck and of his disciples, Cope, Galton, Jacoby, etc., we find that it also conforms to the more general characteristics of evolution and presents, like the phenomena cited above, a series of parabolas, ever becoming higher and higher, but separated from each other by distinct relapses. From the mass of beings battling for life emerge a few stronger individuals whose superiority is due to environment; these triumph over their less-favoured rivals and transmit their own superior characteristics to their offspring. Sooner or later, however, the time arrives when the latter, instead of perpetuating and enhancing the capabilities of their progenitors, fall back and degenerate, exhibiting the phenomenon called by Galton the "return to mediocrity"; the species necessarily deteriorates and passes through a period of involution and of crises, from which, under the influence of external causes, new and more capable types emerge, win victories, and further advance the species. Again the analogy with social evolution is most striking and instructive.

An interesting fact should be noted here—namely, the final term in the various forms of evolution becomes the first term of the succeeding one. Thus the last effect of celestial evolution, the formation of the stars and planets, among them the earth, becomes the point of departure of geologic evolution; the ultimate result of this, the composition of the earth and its surface, is the first cause of the variations among organised beings, therefore of selection

and of organic evolution; lastly the composition of the earth and the nature of man, or in other words the final products of geologic and organic evolution, are the first factors in social development.

A mysterious bond, therefore, connects the various cycles of nature, each of which contributes to the greatness and splendour of the succeeding one.

A single law controls the stellar, the geologic, the organic and the social world; the law of ceaseless transformation, of endless motion; a law of rising, of setting, of greatness, of ruin, of victory and of defeat. A law which, as we recall the victims left in its wake, may indeed terrify us, but which at the same time reassures us with the thought that without it there could be no progress, no advance to higher and better forms of life.

This law, while essentially conservative, is also profoundly radical. The law which, excluding all leaps and bounds, all violent and arbitrary mutations of things, is highly displeasing to the anarchists, who maintain, in the words of Louise Michel, that the word progress is a reactionary word, and that for evolution we should substitute a theory of social precipitation; a law which at the same time condemns inactivity, comfortable idleness, and *laissez faire*, and which therefore is an abomination to the champions of the past.

Finally, it is a beneficent law which dissipates all hatred of individuals because they are not responsible for their mutual relations; and which likewise refuses to defend institutions destined to perish. Those who are ignorant of the theory of

evolution, or who feel a contempt for it, are forced to regard social forms as immutable; and to comfort humanity, which they condemn to eternal suffering, they are compelled to invent a series of erroneous theories, of false hopes and doctrinaire deceptions.

We, however, have need of no such compromises, of no such timid palliatives of the truth; we do not deny the existence of the whirlwind that is carrying us onward, but we can foresee its end, and even now, through the storm-laden clouds gathering on the social horizon, we are able to discern the promise of a serene and beautiful morrow.

CHAPTER VIII

REVOLUTION

EVERY economic system which has appeared in the course of the centuries has presented three phases or states, all sharply defined. There is an organic phase or one of comparative equilibrium, in which, at least apparently, peace prevails among the social classes and collective life develops quietly and steadily. There are times of violent revolt, when a dissatisfied class abandons itself to excesses, to criminal outbursts, which sooner or later are put down with bloodshed, and spend themselves without leaving any trace. Finally there is a phase of profound transformation, distinguished by a series of shocks and upheavals which eventually destroy the existing social form and supplant it with a higher one. In other words, every social organism in the course of its life exhibits three phenomena: equilibrium, revolt and revolution. The first represents the normal state, or health; the second disease, serious but not incurable; the third represents the slow but fatal malady that ends in death.

The difference between revolt and revolution is so sharp and clear that even the most superficial observers have for a long time been impressed by it. For example, when the howling mob in Paris

destroyed the Bastille, 14th July 1789, and the news was brought to Louis XVI. in Versailles, he exclaimed: "What! a revolt!" "No, sire," replied the Duke of Liancourt, "a revolution!"

What is the essential difference between revolt and revolution? Lombroso, who discussed the subject with his usual perspicacity, seems to regard the criminal act, the forcible violation of the existing status by an abnormal being, as the distinguishing characteristic of revolt; but in opposition to this distinction we have the indisputable fact that revolutions themselves frequently consist of a series of acts of individual violence which are not immediately successful although they exert a profound and definite influence on the ultimate success of the insurrectional movement. The French Revolution, and even the Italian, presents a series of violent acts and brutal outbreaks which make it wholly impossible to regard them as characteristic of revolt as distinguished from revolution. The true distinction between revolt and revolution does not consist in any difference in the acts of violence by which they are accompanied, but in the results obtained. Revolts take place without securing any permanent effects; without bringing about any change in the social organism. Thus the revolt of Masaniello, caused by the impost on fruit; the uprising which took place in Naples in 1767 in consequence of a tax imposed on figs; the revolt which broke out in Holland on the placing of an impost on fish; in England the rebellion of Wat Tyler due to the poll tax and that of Jack Cade

caused by excessive taxes; the insurrection of the Milanese against the minister, Prina, occasioned by the stamp tax—all these revolts, which caused great bloodshed, were extinguished without having advanced the cause of humanity a single step. The same may be said of the forcible reactions against the instrument of exchange and production. Even now in China when a bank fails, an uprising occurs and the creditors with their dependants and friends sack the building—but to what purpose? Everything is restored to the condition in which it was before the failure; the relations of creditor and debtor corresponding with the general organisation of property suffers no change. It was the same in Europe when machinery was first introduced; the workmen rose and destroyed their mute rivals—but the senseless vandalism served neither to check nor alter the course of industrial development.

On the other hand the chief characteristic of revolution consists in the fact that it changes the economical, political or religious constitution from top to bottom, according to which factor in human society is affected. It causes humanity to pass from one mode of living to a different, often exactly opposite, manner of existence—it is like the fever which sometimes follows parturition, causing the death of the mother who has given life to a new creature.

Enduring examples of this are the great social transformations which have successively destroyed primitive economy, economy based on slavery, and feudal economy, by a series of convulsions sometimes

requiring ages for their consummation, which have decomposed and recomposed the entire social organisation.

But why is every economic form condemned to perish by the painful process of radical revolution? Why could the law of progress not manifest itself in a more peaceful way and gradually secure a betterment of human institutions. Even a hasty examination of the subject shows us that the historical necessity of economic revolutions is due to three orders of causes which may be conveniently summarized as follows :—

First.—All economic systems lack compensatory elements; the contradictions contained in them do not tend with progress to disappear, but on the contrary constantly become more pronounced and more exasperating. Thus, for example, if we examine ancient society, whose parabolic course we are able to follow to the end, we find that the struggle between the slaves and their owners, far from becoming less bitter with time, constantly became more determined, and the condition of the slaves more deplorable. In the early Roman period the slave was the companion of his master; he worked with him, observed the holidays with him and knelt before the same altar. As Roman society, however, advanced to maturity the abuse of the slaves became intensified; the whip became an official institution; the slave's life was nothing but a prolonged martyrdom; hence the constantly increasing frequency of slave revolts whose horrors are the subject of history. During the Middle Ages

the conditon of the peasants and vassals was not intolerable, but as society advanced, harshness with respect to the labourers became habitual, until finally it reached a stage where a muzzle was placed on the slave's mouth while harvesting, so that he might not defraud his master of any of the fruit; finally the severity became such as to provoke the peasant uprisings, the so-called *jacqueries*. This was not all; simultaneously with this degradation of the labourer, and with his increasing resistance, his labour constantly became less productive; consequently manufacturing and agricultural industries more unsettled and disorganised. Thus economic conditions gradually become more unfavourable as a given social phase advances on its course and as the inevitable process of its antagonisms develops.

Second.—On the other hand, the more a given economic system develops, the more the class most favoured by it, abuses its privileges; and while this class in the first stages of its power may make some concessions to the subject class, as its power becomes more firmly established its origin is forgotten or is lost in the mists of legendary records and the ruling class, more jealous of its prerogatives, becomes more disposed to exercise its power to the utmost. Thus we again see that the antagonism between the classes constantly becomes greater with the development of each social form.

Third.—Further, if the dominant class could appreciate the law of social evolution and foresee the moment when the existing economic form is doomed

to be destroyed, it would be forced by its own perspicacious self-interest voluntarily to introduce measures which would mitigate the violence of the unavoidable transformation, or anticipate and shape its final form.

Social evolution is by its very nature a phenomenon which does not come within the consciousness of those who profit by its various historical phases; born and reared under the protection of time-honoured rights, they are entirely ignorant of the bases of these rights, and also of their ephemeral character; they fancy themselves to be invested with them for ever, by divine right, and are wholly unable to understand how the evolution of things may end in the destruction of their power.

Every student of the French Revolution is amazed at the incredible tranquillity of the middle and upper classes in the social edifice on the very eve of the Revolution. They wrote elegant and learned disquisitions on the virtues of the people, their gentleness, their innocent pleasures, when '93 was already howling at their feet! A spectacle at once ridiculous and terrible, but one peculiar to no epoch, to no people. It is common to all periods of social disintegration because the economic relations of every epoch are an insolvable enigma to both those who suffer and those who profit by them.

These three great groups of causes, the increasing inequalities of the economic system, the constantly growing cupidity of the dominant classes and their unconsciousness of the historical movement in which they are taking part and of the cruelty of the

economic system which surrounds them—these are the inevitable causes of the revolution which takes place when the antagonisms inherent in every historical economic form—and which are ever becoming more bitter, nothing being done to mitigate them—provoke the insurrection of the oppressed classes and the destruction of the prevailing economic establishment. The decreasing return from capital, due to increasing inequalities, hastens the revolution because the intermediate class of professionals—faithful allies of property in its better days—abandons it when no longer able to profit by it, and passes over with arms and baggage to aid the suffering masses with their skill and counsel. Briefless barristers, underpaid physicians, poverty-stricken officials, architects without work, priests whose livings have shrunk—such are the moving spirits of the populace in times of social disintegration. By the intervention of these unexpected allies the masses in the hour of danger acquire capable chieftains to lead them on to victory, and thus the coalition of the labourers and the intellectuals consummates the destruction of the existing social system and supplants it with a higher form.

Are the various causes which have brought about the destruction of past economic forms by means of revolutions still actively at work in the economic system of the present? I do not hesitate to answer yes. Above all, our economic system is lacking in compensatory elements; moreover, the antagonisms inherent in it are constantly growing more acute. The inequalities among classes

are steadily becoming more serious; the condition of the labourers is, it is true, high; their wages have increased somewhat during the last few years, but the condition of the wealthier classes has improved relatively much more. Therefore the distance between the rich and the poor is greater than ever, and still wider and wider grows the abyss between wealth and poverty. At the same time, as if impelled by hidden springs, the deplorable concentration of wealth proceeds and it will end in the establishment of an omnipotent financial oligarchy.

In the United States, for example, 52 per cent. of the families own scarcely 5 per cent. of the total wealth, while 20 per cent. is owned by $\frac{1}{300}$ per cent. of the families; in other words one-thirty-thousandth part of the population possesses one-fifth of the entire wealth. At the head of the 4047 millionaires who dispose of the greater part of the wealth of the United States are the railway kings, those sultans of industry who rush about the continent in their private palaces on wheels, attended by troops of lackeys, major-domos, secretaries, newspaper men, etc., and are obsequiously met at every station by railway employees and members of local societies.

This concentration of wealth is not peculiar to America, it is going on in Germany, in England, in Italy, in every civilised country; and increase of population and the division of estates by inheritance, both are powerless to prevent it.

Simultaneously with the constantly increasing inequality in fortunes the industrial warfare is ever growing more bitter; strikes are more frequent, in-

terruptions to the work of production more serious; consequently the entire social structure is growing more unstable. In addition the further this proceeds, the more exigent becomes the capitalistic class and the more determined to withhold any concessions. The patriarchal relations which until recently prevailed, and which partly dulled the edge of economic egoism, have now entirely vanished; the metayer system has almost disappeared from agriculture; profit sharing from manufacturing, while the relations between the capitalist and the labourer are ever assuming a more mercenary character. Amidst all this the capitalistic class is wholly unconscious of the gravity of the situation; they do not feel the ground trembling beneath their feet, and instead of spontaneously advocating the introduction of means for alleviating the situation they rush into expedients which only exacerbate the present social unrest; they increase the cost of food by imposing duties; they coerce the clamorous proletariat with lockouts, with barbarous persecutions and brutal punishments. The antagonisms at strife in the bosom of the prevailing social form are constantly becoming fiercer and more sinister. Therefore, if we are justified in drawing from the past any inference regarding the present or the future we are warranted in concluding that the society of to-day, like a projectile thrown with irresistible force, will be shattered in the shock of revolution.

Foreseeing the conclusion to which a conscientious examination of the facts leads, every thinking person

naturally asks why should we wait with folded hands until unconscious evolution brings about a catastrophe to destroy the capitalistic system. Why should man, conscious of evolution and of what is in store for him, not prevent his unhappy fate by introducing salutary institutions to reduce or eliminate the vast differences which characterise the economic phase in which we live, and secure the transformation peaceably and without shock? Why should the rational, conscious intervention of man in the social movement be inadmissible? This at first for various reasons seems impossible. When we see that the economic systems which have preceded the present have been brought to an end, never by a slow and gradual process, but always by a destructive revolution, we are forced to conclude that there is little likelihood that the present form will escape a similar fate; moreover the doctrine of probabilities, which predicates the repetition in the future of events which have been repeatedly observed in the past, confirms the conclusion; and finally this conclusion seems to be supported by a fact of extraordinary importance. The political power in every human epoch is an appanage of the proprietors, who either directly or through their creatures or representatives have always and still do exercise absolute control in the government of the State. Such being the fact, how can the social constitution ever be changed by a slow and gradual reform?

A reform of this sort, however, would strike at acquired rights, at least in part, and would limit, if not entirely destroy, the privileges and attributes

of the proprietors. How then can we suppose that the State, inspired and dominated by land-owners and capitalists, would voluntarily undertake a social reform which would destroy or greatly curtail the privileges of property and capital? What reason have we for assuming that the ruling class will decide to commit this suicidal act? This hypothesis therefore is contrary to common-sense and reason. To these observations others equally weighty may be opposed.

Above all, the historical fact that no social phase has ever been terminated by a pacific reform does not warrant the conclusion that the present economic system must necessarily obey the same law. History is not an exact science; the phenomena coming within its purview are not yet so numerous, so certain, so similar that the doctrine of probabilities can be applied to them; from the repeated occurrence of an event in the remote past it is not possible to deduce its future repetition with the same certainty that we infer the reappearance of the sun from the fact that it has risen for ages. Therefore there is nothing to prevent the belief that the present economic system—unlike its predecessors—may pass into a higher phase by a gradual and rational process of transformation, and not by a violent upheaval.

The fact that the political power is monopolised by property is doubtless most serious; its importance must not be underestimated; still if this fact at first seems to preclude the possiblity of any decisive reform, further consideration will demonstrate the

contrary. Some years ago I became convinced that the two great classes into which property is divided, landed and capitalistic, which present characteristics and involve interests mutually antagonistic, are the bases of two political parties which are also hostile to each other. Landed property represents the Conservative element, and capitalistic the progressive or Liberal party.

These two parties are engaged in a ceaseless conflict which results generally to the advantage of the labouring classes, and is an invaluable ferment in the movement of social reform, since each of the two classes struggling for political supremacy is compelled to seek the alliance of the working classes by means of concessions and favours which result in great improvement in their material and moral conditions.

The typical illustration of this is furnished by the parliamentary history of England in the period following the passage of the Corn Laws. At that time the land-owners—omnipotent in Parliament—had imposed protective duties on grain which raised the price of food and consequently of rent. The capitalists, although they indemnified themselves for the rise in wages, by lengthening the working day, intensifying labour, employing women and children, and introducing machinery, were, nevertheless, greatly injured by the rise in the price of grain. They, therefore, were not slow to attack the protective duty by establishing the famous league against the Corn Laws and inciting the people against the land-owners; the latter, to defend themselves, and

at the same time humiliate the capitalistic class, claimed that the sufferings of the people were due to the exploitation of the labouring classes by the capitalists, and instituted a movement for the reduction of the hours of work and for restricting the employment of women and children.

Villiers, a manufacturer in the House of Commons, annually introduced a law for the abolition of the duty on grain, while a land-owner, Lord Ashley, devoted his attention entirely to factory legislation. This parliamentary fight between rent and profits eventually proved advantageous to the labouring classes since it led to the abolition of duties on corn, and a consequent reduction in the price of food; and also to laws limiting the hours of work, which according to Marx himself, an authority who could not be accused of optimism, effected the physical and moral regeneration of the British people. In this we have a classic example (and many others no less convincing might be adduced), which shows us that even the exclusive monopoly of power on the part of property is unable by itself to prevent the intervention of the State to mitigate the evils which torment the economic system.

There is another consideration which ought to have great weight—namely, that if the proprietary classes find it to their interest to father decisive social reforms during those periods when their property is safe and secure, it is much more to their interest to advance these reforms in critical times, when the destruction of the prevailing economic form is imminent. It is a well-known fact, recorded in the

history of every age, that the dominant classes are always opposed to radical reforms, even when society is on the brink of ruin—in fact, it is at precisely these critical moments that they most stubbornly persist in their senseless acts. This is due to the absolute unconsciousness of these classes, who, wholly ignorant of their impending fall, continue to dance on the brink of the volcano. This complete ignorance of economic evolution, which blinded the ruling classes in the past, may now be dispelled by that science whose noble mission is to guide humanity on the path it must, willy-nilly, travel to the end. When science formulates the law of the evolution of the economic relations of the present, and shows that their decline in inevitable, social reform will harmonise with the interests also of the privileged classes, who will then understand that any effort on their part to save an institution that is doomed will be entirely futile and that it will be more profitable and wiser resolutely to provide for the unavoidable economic transformation and thus lessen, or obviate entirely, the shocks and disasters, which this metamorphosis, if left to itself, would occasion the dominant classes.

Moreover, the theory of evolution, far from excluding the possibility of social reform, points out the manner in which it can, or rather must, be accomplished; far from lulling to sleep, it impels thinkers and upright men to action; instead of leading to political nihilism it postulates the reparation of present wrongs as the supreme end of human endeavour.

In fact, during the critical period which marks

the decline of one historical epoch and the dawn of its successor, such is the high purpose which all friends of humanity and progress can or rather ought to impose on themselves; such is the mission to which each of us, according to his strength, should lend his aid in these days of unrest and general decay.

To remind the dominant classes of their high duty, which they must not shrink, I cannot do better than repeat the solemn words addressed to the French Chamber of Deputies, or rather to France itself, not by a Jacobin, but by a Conservative, Alexis de Tocqueville, in the critical days of 1848.

"For the first time," he says, "I feel a certain fear for the future, and what convinces me that I am right is that this is not simply a personal impression of mine; I think I may appeal to all who are here, and all will admit that a certain uneasiness, an indefinable fear has taken possession of all spirits, that for the first time the feeling, the sense of instability, this warning sentiment of revolution, which sometimes heralds them, and at others gives birth to them,—that this feeling is both intense and widespread. Do you not intuitively feel that the very ground of Europe is trembling? Perhaps you do not feel—how shall I say it?—that the spirit of revolution is in the air. Where it was born, whence it came I know not, and I do not know—believe me—whom it will sweep away. Are you certain of the morrow? Do you know what will happen in a year, a month, a day? You do not know, but what you do know is that there is a

storm on the horizon, that it is descending upon you—will you allow it to overtake you ?

"Gentlemen," concludes De Tocqueville, "I beg you not to, I do not demand, I beseech you ; I would willingly throw myself on my knees before you, so real and grave do I consider the danger, so convinced am I of this, that to mention it is not a mere flight of rhetoric. If the danger is great, provide against it while there is still time, correct the evils, change the present system, for this system is leading you to destruction."

Thus spoke De Tocqueville, 27th January 1848, and four weeks after his prophetic, but unheeded, speech the Revolution swept Louis Philippe from the throne of France. Thus science foretells revolutions and shows the ruling classes how to prevent them ; but they, in the intoxication of their power and victory, turn a deaf ear to the warning. Instead of alleviating the increasing and threatening differences by wise measures, they, by their acts, hasten the coming of the revolution, and in their blindness forge the weapon which is to destroy them.

There is, however, an essential difference between the storm which swept over France in 1848 and that which now threatens the entire capitalistic world, and the approaching Revolution which inspired De Tocqueville's words, the event which justified the fears of the French statesman, was not of such gravity as to menace the entire social fabric, for it was only a political revolution which was to wrest the crown from one man and place it on the head of another.

To-day, however, the situation is entirely different, and much more serious. We are not confronted by a political revolution, but we are advancing toward a social revolution which is destined to wrest the sceptre from a single class and transfer it to society as a whole. To-day it is not the interests of a reigning house or the form of government that is at stake, but it is the fate of all humanity, of civilisation itself, that hangs in the balance.

Confronted by the fate which threatens contemporary society and the inevitable destruction of the present economic organisation, will the dominating classes persevere in their contempt for the counsels of science and their old aversion for rational reforms ?

In closing, permit me to express the hope that they will not, and also to add that the most noble, the most fruitful mission in which a man can now engage is the reparation of social injustice and the introduction of measures for reducing the inequalities inherent in our social system. By helping the down-trodden one's own character is sweetened and fortified, and the altruistic sentiments which are to form part of the moral patrimony of future humanity are developed.

Even if the idea of social reform is regarded as illusory; even if it involves irreconcilable contradictions; even if it were proved that history must go on to the end by abrupt leaps and not by gradual, rational transformations, it would be no less certain that an imperative duty is imposed on all upright men and women to exert them-

selves for the temporal redemption of humanity. Even if the idea that man's voluntary action avails to modify, intensify or mitigate the cruelties of social evolution were proved to be illusory, this idea would nevertheless serve to stimulate human activity in the ceaseless struggle for the right, and thus it would bear fruit and prosper.

The struggle of a rational will with fate, illogical as it may seem, is due to one of the highest characteristics of humanity: it is the secret of its intellectual and moral greatness; it is, in fine, the mysterious source of its immortal virtues. "If," says Lessing, "a God grasped all the verities in one hand, and in the other all the virtues necessary to discover them and asked man which hand he would take, he ought to answer the latter, for the efforts necessary to attain truth are more fecund and beneficial than truth itself." The same may be said of human efforts directed to the realisation of justice, which, although they may fail to attain their purpose, obtain a result much more precious—the elevation of the human character.

Columbus, thinking he was sailing toward India, discovered America; humanity, ceaselessly struggling for the reform of social institutions, will attain involuntarily a very different result, but a much higher one: the reformation of itself, the ennoblement of its own character, the perfect consummation of biologic evolution, by the creation of a higher and purer type of man.

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